

SCIENCE FICTION Quarterly

FEB. 1952

132 PAGES

25¢

ROGUE PRINCESS

by L. Sprague de Camp

THREE WORLDS IN SHADOW

by Joe Gibson

ORDEAL ON SYRTIS

by Milton Lesser



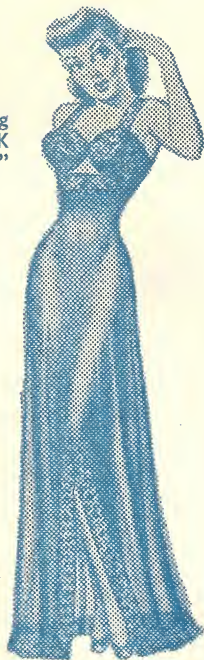
ALL STORIES NEW
No Reprints

A
DOUBLE-ACTION
MAGAZINE



She'll be your "Dream Girl" You'll "Bewitch" her with it

Daring
"BLACK
MAGIC"



"DREAM GIRL" She'll look alluring, breathtaking, enticing, exotic. . . . Just picture her in it. . . beautiful, fascinating SEE-THRU sheer. Naughty but nice. . . . It's French Fashion finery. . . with peek-a-boo magic lace. . . . Gorgeously transparent yet completely practical (washes like a dream. . . will not shrink). Has lacy waistline, lacy shoulder straps and everything to make her love you for it. A charm revealing Dream Girl Fashion. . . . In gorgeous Black.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED
or your money back

DREAM GIRL FASHIONS, Dept. 63
318 Market St., Newark, New Jersey

Please send me DREAM GIRL gown at \$9.95. If not entirely satisfied, I'll return within 10 days for full cash refund.

() I enclose \$9.95 cash, check or money order, send postage prepaid (I save up to 90c postage). (You may get it at our store too!)

() I will pay postman \$9.95 plus postage. Check size wanted:
32 34 36 38 40 IN BLACK ONLY
(If you don't know the size send approximate height and weight)

Name
Address
City State



Heaven
Sent
Oriental
Magic



Out of the pages of the Arabian Nights comes this glamorous sheer Harem pajama. You'll look beguiling, alluring, irresistible, enticing. You'll thrill to the sleek, clinging wispy appeal that they will give you. He'll love you for transplanting you to a dream world of adoration centuries old. Brief figure hugging top gives flattering appeal to its daring bare midriff. Doubled at the right places, it's the perfect answer for hostess wear. Billowing sheer bottoms for rich luxurious lounging. He'll adore you in this charm revealing Dream Girl Fashion. In wispy sheer black.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED
or your money back

DREAM GIRL FASHIONS, Dept. 238
318 Market St., Newark, New Jersey

Please send "Heaven Sent" pajamas at \$9.95. If not entirely satisfied, I'll return within 10 days for full cash refund.

() I enclose \$9.95 cash, check or money order, send postage prepaid (I save up to 90c postage). (You may get it at our store too!)

() I will pay postman \$9.95 plus postage. Check size wanted:
32 34 36 38 40 IN BLACK ONLY
(If you don't know the size send approximate height and weight)

Name
Address
City State



Daring Bare-back
She'll be en-
tranced with it



Your Dream girl will be an exquisite vision of allurements, charm, fascination and loveliness in this exotic, bewitching, daring bare-back filmy sheer gown. It's delicate translucent fabric (washes like a dream) will not shrink. Have Paris at home, with this cleverly designed halter neck that ties or unties at the flick of a finger. Lavishly laced midriff and peek-a-boo bottom. She'll love you for this charm revealing Dream Girl Fashion. In exquisite black sheer.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED
or your money back

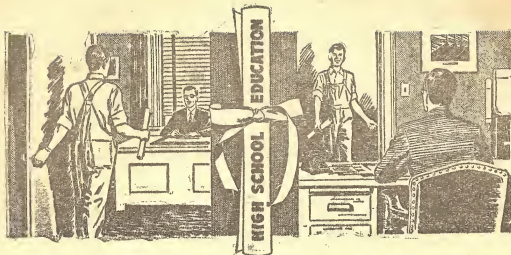
DREAM GIRL FASHIONS, Dept. 337
318 Market St., Newark, New Jersey

Please send BLACK SORCERY gown at \$9.95. If not entirely satisfied, I'll return within 10 days for full cash refund.

() I enclose \$9.95 cash, check or money order, send postage prepaid (I save up to 90c postage). (You may get it at our store too!)

() I will pay postman \$9.95 plus postage. Check size wanted:
32 34 36 38 40 IN BLACK ONLY
(If you don't know the size send approximate height and weight)

Name
Address
City State



Is THIS all that separates you from a better job?

When the boss looks around for a man to promote, the chances are mighty good that he'll pick a high school graduate over one who quit school in the 8th grade.

U. S. Census figures prove it. The average pay of high school trained men is far greater than that of men who did not graduate. Their chances for employment are better.

If it's lack of education that's holding you back, do something about it right now! Send the coupon today! Find out how International Correspondence Schools courses enable you to go to high school at home, in spare time. You need study only the subjects you've missed, to qualify you for a State Equivalency Certificate.

Don't wait! Mail this coupon now!

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

ICS

BOX 6007-D, SCRANTON 9, PENNA.

Please send me full particulars about the courses marked X:

☐ HIGH SCHOOL

- ☐ Aeronautics Courses
- ☐ Aeronautical Engineer's, Jr.
- ☐ Aircraft & Engine Mechanics
- ☐ Aircraft Drafting & Design
- ☐ Air Conditioning and Plumbing Courses
- ☐ Air Conditioning
- ☐ Heating
- ☐ Refrigeration
- ☐ Plumbing
- ☐ Steam Fitting
- ☐ Automobile Courses
- ☐ Automobile
- ☐ Automobile Body Repairing
- ☐ Automobile Electrical Technician
- ☐ Automobile Technician
- ☐ Chemical Courses
- ☐ Chemical Engineering
- ☐ Chemistry, Analytical
- ☐ Chemistry, Industrial
- ☐ Food-Plant Sanitation
- ☐ Petroleum Production & Refining
- ☐ Plastics
- ☐ Pulp and Paper Making
- ☐ Civil Engineering and Architectural Courses
- ☐ Architecture
- ☐ Architectural Drafting
- ☐ Bridge and Building Foreman
- ☐ Building Estimating
- ☐ Civil Engineering
- ☐ Contracting and Building
- ☐ Highway Engineering
- ☐ Reading Structural Blueprints
- ☐ Sanitary Engineering
- ☐ Structural Drafting
- ☐ Structural Engineering
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ Communications Courses
- ☐ Electronics
- ☐ Practical Telephony
- ☐ Radio, Casual
- ☐ Radio Operating
- ☐ Radio Service
- ☐ Telegraph Engineering
- ☐ Television
- ☐ Electrical Courses
- ☐ Electrical Drafting
- ☐ Electrical Engineering
- ☐ Electric Light and Power
- ☐ Lighting Technician
- ☐ Practical Electrician
- ☐ Diesel Engines Courses
- ☐ Diesel Engines
- ☐ Internal Combustion Engines
- ☐ Mechanical Courses
- ☐ Forging
- ☐ Foundry Work
- ☐ Heat Treatment of Metals
- ☐ Industrial Engineering
- ☐ Industrial Instrumentation
- ☐ Industrial Machinery
- ☐ Machine Shop
- ☐ Mach. Drafting
- ☐ Mechanical Engineering
- ☐ Mold-Loft Work
- ☐ Patternmaking—Wood, Metal
- ☐ Reading Shop Blueprints
- ☐ Sheet-Metal Drafting
- ☐ Sheet-Metal Worker
- ☐ Ship Drafting
- ☐ Ship Fitting
- ☐ Tool Designing
- ☐ Toolmaking
- ☐ Welding—Gas and Electric
- ☐ Railroad Courses
- ☐ Air Brake
- ☐ Diesel Locomotive
- ☐ Locomotive Engineer
- ☐ Locomotive Foreman
- ☐ Locomotive Mechanic
- ☐ Railroad Section Foreman
- ☐ Steam-Diesel Loco. Eng.
- ☐ Stationery Eng'g's Courses
- ☐ Power Plant Engineer
- ☐ Stationery Foreman
- ☐ Stationery Steam Engineer
- ☐ Textile Courses
- ☐ Cotton Manufacturing
- ☐ Loom Fitting
- ☐ Rayon Manufacturing
- ☐ Textile Engineering
- ☐ Woollen Manufacturing
- ☐ Business and Academic Courses
- ☐ Accounting
- ☐ Advertising
- ☐ Business Administration
- ☐ Business Correspondence
- ☐ Bookkeeping
- ☐ Cashiering
- ☐ Customs
- ☐ Dictation
- ☐ English
- ☐ French
- ☐ German
- ☐ Italian
- ☐ Japanese
- ☐ Latin
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Penmanship
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Public Speaking
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Statistics
- ☐ Typewriting
- ☐ United States History
- ☐ United States Geography
- ☐ World History
- ☐ World Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Civics
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ English Literature
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ History

Volume
1
Number
4

SCIENCE FICTION Quarterly

February
1952

132 PAGES OF NEW STORIES — NO REPRINTS!

★ ★ *Feature Novel* ★ ★
THREE WORLDS IN SHADOW Joe Gibson 8

James Mitchell takes on the job of protecting Eileen Graham from sinister elements, and finds that three worlds depend upon their uncovering the secret behind the strange failure of the Graham air-purifiers!



An Unusual Novelslet

ROGUE PRINCESS L. Sprague de Camp 60
It's a mad, merry mix-up when Claude Godwin finds he has to play the role of Pretender to the English throne, willingly or unwillingly!

Short Subjects

COMMUNICADO Katherine MacLean 88
Here is an article on the borderline between fact and fiction.

ORDEAL ON SYRTIS Milton Lesser 97
His romantic spirit sends O'hara to a suicidal "rescue"...

INTERVENTION Michael Sherman 105
If it were your decision to make, would you vote to revive this woman?

Special Features

IT SAYS HERE (Letters From All of You, And Editorial Comment) 119
THE RECKONING (A Report to the Readers) 127
AS I WAS SAYING The Editor 128
READERS' PREFERENCE PAGE 130

Cover by Milton Luros, from "Intervention"

Interior illustrations by Luros and Poulton

ROBERT W. LOWNDES, Editor

SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY, February, 1952, published February, May, August, and November, by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, Inc., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 241 Church Street, New York 13, New York. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Holyoke, Mass., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Single copy 25c yearly subscription \$1.00. Entire contents copyright 1951 by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, Inc. Manuscripts must be accompanied by self-addressed envelopes to insure return if not accepted, and while reasonable care will be exercised in handling them, it is understood that they are submitted at author's risk. Printed in U. S. A.

BE A SUCCESS AS A RADIO-TELEVISION TECHNICIAN

**2 FREE BOOKS
SHOW HOW
MAIL COUPON**

America's Fast Growing Industry Offers You

**EXTRA PAY IN
ARMY, NAVY,
AIR FORCE**



If you expect to go into military service, read *Special 1000: Fixing Radio, TV Machines* and you will get extra cash, extra pay, more interesting duty at pay as it varies from a soldier's home pay. You can also prepare for your Radio-TV job after leaving service. It's **READY TO READ WITH R. E. L. NOW.** Mail Coupon TODAY.

1. EXTRA MONEY IN SPARE TIME

Many students make \$5, \$10 a week extra fixing neighbors' Radios in spare time while learning. The day you enroll I start sending you **SPECIAL BOOKLETS** to show you how to do this. Teaser you build with parts I send helps you service sets. All equipment is yours to keep.

2. GOOD PAY JOB

Your next step is a good job installing and servicing Radio-Television sets or becoming boss of your own Radio-Television sales and service shop or getting a good job in a Broadcasting Station. Today there are over 90,000,000 home and auto Radios, 3100 Broadcasting Stations are on the air. Aviation and Police Radio, Micro-Wave Radio, Two-Way Radio are all expanding, making more and better opportunities for servicing and communication technicians and FCC licensed operators.

3. BRIGHT FUTURE

And think of the opportunities in Television! In 1950 over 5,000,000 Television sets were sold. By 1954 authorities estimate 25,000,000 Television sets will be in use. Over 100 Television Stations are now operating, with experts predicting 1,000. Now is the time to get in line for success and a bright future in America's fast-growing industry. Be a Radio-Television Technician. Mail coupon for Lesson and Book—FREE.

I Will Train You at Home

**Read How You Practice Servicing or Communications
with Many Kits of Parts You Get!**

I TRAINED THESE MEN

Ray Spedding to Television. "More my own shop. Am authorized serviceman for a large manufacturer, do service for 7 dealers. R. E. L. enabled me to build service reputation." P. MILLER, Maumee, Ohio.

Carl Gundacker, Double Salary. "Am with Radio-Television as transmitter operator. More than doubled salary since starting in Radio full time. R. E. L. has been helpful to me." A. FISHER, New Cumberland, Pa.

\$100 Week in Spare Time. "Before finishing course, I earned as much as \$100 a week in Radio servicing in spare time. I recommend R. E. L. to everyone who shows interest in Radio." R. J. PETRUFF, Missoula, Florida.

First job through R. E. L. "My first job was operator with R. E. L., obtained license by your Graduate Service Dept., am now Chief Eng. of Police Radio Station WQXX." T. S. NORRIS, Hamilton, Ohio.

I send you many valuable kits of parts for **PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE.** They "bring to life" theory you learn in my Illustrated Course. As part of my Servicing Course, you build a complete, powerful Radio Receiver, a Multi-tuner used in earning extra spare time money, AM and FM Signal Generator, etc. In my Communications Course, you assemble a low-power Broadcasting Transmitter that shows you how to put a station "on the air," a Wavemeter, etc. This and other equipment I send you, is yours to keep.

**NOW! Advanced
Television Practice**

Now, send TV kit booklets to build high-definition TV. KIT includes with parts money. You can assemble TV set, or more, more, more! Building complete PRACTICAL experience. Servicing and repairing TV, radio, and general.

Keep your job while training at home. Hundreds I've trained are successful **RADIO-TELEVISION TECHNICIANS.** Most had no previous experience; many do more than graduate school education. Learn Radio-Television principles from Illustrated lessons. Get **PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE**—build complete Electronic Multituner for conducting tests; also practice servicing Radios or operating Transmitters—appreciated with credit in courses in Radio and Television. At left is just part of the equipment my students build with many kits of parts I furnish. All equipment is yours to keep. Many students make \$5, \$10 a week while taking neighborhood Radio in spare time.

Mail Coupon For 2 Books FREE

Get Now! Send for my **FREE DOUBLE OFFER.** Coupon entitles you to school lessons on Servicing show how you learn Radio-Television at home. You'll also receive my 44-page book, "How to Be a Success in Radio-Television." You'll read what my graduates are doing, seeing, are photos of equipment you practice with at home. Send coupon in envelope or paste on postal. **J. E. SMITH, Pres.**
Dept. RBT National Radio Institute, Washington 5, D. C. . . Our 10th year.

**The ABC's of
SERVICING**

Good for Both—FREE

Mr. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. RBT,
National Radio Institute, Washington 5, D. C.
Mail me Sample Lesson and 44-page Book about How to Win
Success in Radio-Television. Book FREE. (No money will cost.
Please write plainly.)

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____
Approved Order U. S. 1. 100

**How to Be a
Success in
RADIO-
TELEVISION**

Miss Lee-Fashions

Style #633 MISTY LACE Imported Chantilly Lace

Sheer enchantment with the magic of lace... Exquisitely lovely sheer net clings lovingly over bare shoulders to a figure-carassing bodice of imported Chantilly Lace that falls into a graceful peplum and cascades helplessly to the hemline of the widest of wide filmy dancing skirts (over its own slip). Colorful blushing flowers highlight a tiny waist. In Superb Quality Celanese Taffeta and Marquisette net

Bewitching Colors

- BLACK • AQUA
- WHITE • ROSE

IN ALL SIZES

8-11-13-15-17
10-12-14-16-18-20

only **9⁹⁸**

18 1/2-19 1/2-20 1/2
22 1/2-24 1/2-26 1/2

38-40-42-44-46-48

only **10⁹⁸**

Style #C-8 POLKA DOTS

For dancing... for romancing
Lace the "Gretchen" bodice firmly to the breathtaking polka dot decolletage. The full-bodied skirt swishes and rustles as you walk, as you dance, in finest quality silky rayon.

IN BEAUTIFUL COLORS:

- BLACK • GREEN
- BROWN • AMERICAN
- ROSE • BEAUTY

IN ALL SIZES only

8-11-13-15-17
10-12-14-16-18-20

18 1/2-19 1/2-20 1/2 only **7⁹⁸**

22 1/2-24 1/2-26 1/2
38-40-42-44-46-48

Send YBC
for our
latest
catalog!



SENT ON APPROVAL - 10 DAY FREE TRIAL

MISS LEE-FASHIONS, Inc., Dept. D-12
400 MADISON AVE., NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

Please send me the following dresses in styles, sizes and colors indicated. If not delighted I may return dress within 10 days for refund.

Style No.	Size	First Color Choice	Second Color Choice

☐ Send C.O.D. I enclose \$1.00 deposit. I'll pay postman balance plus postage.

☐ I enclose full amount \$_____ you pay postage.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

A.P.O. and Foreign Orders must be Prepaid

KILL THESE HAIR-DESTROYING GERMS

STAPHYLOCOCCUS
ALBUS

MORDECOCCUS

TRICHOSPORUM
OVATE

MICROBACILLUS

NOTHING, Absolutely nothing
known to Science can do more to

SAVE YOUR HAIR

Beware of your Itchy scalp, hair loss, dandruff, head scales, unpleasant head odors! Nature may be warning you of approaching baldness. Heed Nature's warning! Treat your scalp to scientifically prepared Ward's Formula.

Millions of trouble-breeding bacteria, living on your sick scalp (see above) are killed on contact. Ward's Formula kills not one, but all four types of these destructive scalp germs now recognized by many medical authorities as a significant cause of baldness. Kill these germs—don't risk letting them kill your hair growth.

ENJOY THESE 5 BENEFITS IMMEDIATELY

1. Kills these 4 types of germs that retard normal hair growth—on contact
2. Removes ugly infectious dandruff—fast
3. Brings hair-nourishing blood to scalp—quickly
4. Stops annoying scalp itch and burn—instantly
5. Starts wonderful self-massaging action—within 3 seconds

Once you're bald, that's it, friends! There's nothing you can do. Your hair is gone forever. So are your chances of getting it back. But Ward's Formula, used as directed, keeps your sick scalp free of itchy dandruff, seborrhea, and stops the hair loss they cause. Almost at once your hair looks thicker, more attractive and alive.

We don't ask you to believe us. Thousands of men and women—first skeptics! Just as you are—have proved what we say. Read their grateful letters. Study the guarantee—it's better than a free trial! Then try Ward's Formula at our risk. Use it for only 10 short days. You must enjoy all the benefits we claim—or we return not only the price you pay—but **DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK**. You be the judge! Ward Laboratories, Inc., 1480 Broadway, New York 18, N. Y.

TO SAVE YOUR HAIR ACT NOW

Send coupon today for 10-day offer. Send No Money

ACT TODAY or YOU MAY BE TOO LATE!

WARD LABORATORIES, INC.,
1480 B'way Dept. 2000-W, New York 18, N. Y.
Each Ward's Formula to me at once. I will pay postage two
dollars plus postage. I must be completely satisfied within
10 days, or you GUARANTEE refund of DOUBLE MY MONEY
BACK upon return of bottle and unused portion.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____
☐ Check here if you enclose \$2.00 with order, and we will pay postage. Some refund
after hold, of course. APO, FPO, Canada & Foreign add \$10.00 COD.

DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

SCALP ITCH
FALLING
HAIR

DANDRUFF

HEAD
ODORS

Proof!

We got letters
like these
every day
from grateful
men and
women all
over the
world.

I must admit I didn't have much
faith in it, but I hadn't been using
Ward's one week before I could see
it was helping me. I could feel my
hair getting thicker.

R. K. Cleveland, Ohio

Out of all the Hair Experts I went
to, I've gotten the most help from
one bottle of Ward's Formula.

C. La M. Philadelphia, Pa.

After using Ward's for only 12 days,
my hair has stopped falling out.

R. W. C. Cleveo, Mo.

I am tickled to death with the re-
sults. In just two weeks' time—no
dandruff! W. T. W. Perole, Cal.
I feel encouraged to say that the in-
furiating scalp itch which has bothered
me for 5 years, is now gone.

J. M. K. Columbus, Ohio

Guarantee

This written guarantee entitles you not only to
return of price paid for Ward's Formula, but
Double Your Money Back unless you actually SEE,
FEEL and **ENJOY** all benefits herein claimed
in only ten days. The test is at our risk. All you do
is return unused portion or the empty
bottle unless completely satisfied.

Ward Laboratories, Inc.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

WARD LABORATORIES, INC., 1480 B'WAY, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.



Air currents tossed the sky-sled madly, as Mitch fought the controls. The spaceship had screamed past them...

THREE WORLDS IN SHADOW



Feature Novel Of
Days To Come

By **JOE GIBSON**

Mercury, Venus, Mars—all depended on the Graham air-renewers, for once a man or woman stepped out of the domed cities, an artificial air-supply was vital. The Graham air-renewers had replaced the old, short-lived air-tanks. But now, the renewers were beginning to fail, and James Mitchell, hired to protect Eileen Graham, found that this was much more than one woman's battle against intrigue that was destroying her business. Someone was trying to control the air-supply, and gain life-and-death power over the worlds!



THE SHIP came gliding out of the star-sprinkled heavens, its forward rockets extending beams of blue-hot energy past its sleek nose. The gaunt, crater-scarred surface of the Moon rolled past, ten thousand miles off the portside. Aft and to the starboard, Earth was a bright, blue-green bauble against the jet-blackness of space. Sunlight bathed the smooth, five-hundred-foot hull as the ship jockeyed into an orbit circling the Moon. The forward tubes dimmed

There has been much discussion of sociological backgrounds of the future, and many feel that those science-fiction stories which present the familiar, Western-world economic order, projected into times to come, are unreal. They point out the vast changes that occurred here on Earth, following the opening-up of the far corners of our own planet to large-scale colonization—social and economic revolutions that altered not only the colonies, but also the "mother countries". Surely, such readers have argued, analogous changes should be expected should we reach and colonize the planets. We would not see the familiar social and economic structures we have here, now, although there is no telling whether the changes would be agreeable to our own, present-day viewpoints.

This strikes us as a reasonable enough argument—with one reservation: such changes, we think, would be gradual, and might not show up for a long time. For one thing, it is virtually axiomatic that humans on other planets would be dependent upon Earth for decades—perhaps for a few generations. (Assuming that the interplanetary era begins in our own time, before any major changes have occurred in our own milieu.) It would seem to follow, then, that the existing "order" on Earth would be strengthened by the situation, at first. That is, I think we would see much of planetary colonial life under the control of large Terrestrial corporations—supervised by the government, but still privately-owned. That transportation would be a government monopoly, as Mr. Gibson relates in this novel, also seems likely, for the reasons he states.

The present story, while showing three planets in a fairly advanced state of colonization, still presents the early period of an interplanetary era, and it seems to us that the picture (allowing for liberties in the description of actual conditions on the planets—after all, we won't be sure until we get there) is an intelligent one.

But there's plenty of room for argument on this subject, and the welcome mat is out for anyone who wants to dissent and give battle in "It Says Here".

their blue fire and winked out.

The freighter *Orion Girl* floated majestically in deep space above the Moon, five hundred tons of steel monster shackled to the gravity-pull of a dead world. The intercom blared in the control blister. "Atomics off. Gravitors balanced. All clear, engine room."

Pilot-Astrogator James Mitchell threw a harried glance at the intercom speaker, then fastened his gaze back

on the wide console of instrument-dials, gauges, buttons, switches, levers, knobs, and signal-lights that curved around the front of his acceleration chair. He had the manual control column pulled from its recess, gripping it firmly in his hands with a thumb curled over the Release Automatics switch.

"I think we've got her," he commented brusquely. "Stand by gravitors. Rouchak, how's the servos?"

"*Servos check, Mitch,*" the intercom reported.

It was no problem any man could work out in his head, and it allowed no leeway for guesswork. It had to be computed mathematically, before the ship approached its orbit, then fed into the control automatics. The automatics guided the ship into the computed angle-and-velocity pattern. If the computations were wrong, the ship wouldn't hold its orbit—it would either break free and slide off into space or stagger and start plummeting toward the planet. Either result would demand swift action, with no time to fool with mathematical formulae or key-punch control board. It would demand the action of the pilot's two hands on the manual-control column.

But it had been done before, this business of swinging into an orbit around a planet. The computations were perfected to a fair degree of accuracy. Mitch watched the grav-indicator reading coincide with the chronometer sweep-hand and breathed a sigh of relief. "All clear controls," he said. "Steady on orbit."

"*Engine room on final check,*" the intercom acknowledged; then added, as if an afterthought, "*Servos on final check!*"

"Clear board," Mitch said, signing off. He flipped the intercom switch and pulled the ship's log from its slot in his chair arm, folding the control column back into the console by depressing the foot-pedal on the locking-lever. He jerked loose the buckle on his seat-belt, slumped down in his chair, and opened the log. Plucking the stylus from its niche in the metal cover, he casually jotted down the orbit entry.

With a second glance at the chronometer, he slipped the log back into its chair-arm slot, pushed himself erect, and climbed over the chair-arm to the deck. He stepped behind his metal-backed chair and leaned on it, his back to the myriad, glittering instruments, his brown hand fishing a

pack of cigarettes out of the breast-pocket of his space-jacket.

He was a tall, lean figure in space-man's gray, standing in the starlit gloom beneath the transparent control blister. As he poked a cigarette between his lips, and pulled its tip to a glowing spark, the orange glow reflected from his hand to the thin, hard planes of his face. His gray eyes scrutinized the shadowy chamber around him, carelessly, and turned to the bone-white globe of the Moon floating out to his right. Mountains and craters were dim markings of gray, forming a familiar topography that guided his eye to a certain spot. There, ten thousand miles away, harsh sunlight struck a giant crystal dome on a Lunar plain, reflecting from it in a tiny, steadily burning splinter of flame.

That tiny splinter on the vast, dead surface was Man's dominance of the Moon. A city stood beneath that crystal dome, the first city men had built on another world; to Mitch, it was home, civilization, the end of loneliness and the weeks of drifting across the star-strewn blackness of space.

KARL ROUCHAK came up the ladderway from the lower lounge-deck. The faint glow of light from below illuminated his gray-clad, stocky figure, the neatly curled blond hair and the chill blue gaze. He stepped onto the starlit deck and stared at the Moon. "Contacted the shuttle, yet?"

"Uh-uh—not time yet," Mitch replied; "they'll be along."

"It's Handley's turn to stay aboard this trip," Rouchak observed quietly, still gazing at the Moon—at that tiny splinter of reflected sunlight on the gray patch of a Lunar plain.

"It's Handley's turn," Mitch agreed. He studied the cigarette glowing between his fingers. "You going to look up that little dancer again?"

Rouchak turned and flashed Mitch a white-toothed grin in the dim light. "If she's still around; if she isn't,

there are other fish—warm-blooded, of course.”

It was a ticklish proposition, nudging five hundred tons of space freighter around a world at just the precise velocity to keep it on orbit. Even the pull of distant Earth had to be included with the pull of the Moon, and the orbit set in just the right angle, at just the right velocity to counteract that pull with centrifugal force.

Mitch grinned. “While you’re at it,” he suggested, “you might look up a new pilot; I won’t be going out with you two, the next trip.”

Rouchak stiffened. “What? You’re quitting?”

Mitch nodded, took a pull on his cigarette, and blew a streamer of smoke against the foamflex deck. “Didn’t want to say anything ’til we got back, Karl, but my share of this last cargo will set me up nicely.” He paused, reluctant, then added, “I’m not anxious to be a millionaire, like you two.”

Rouchak, too, was hesitant. Then he grinned and nodded understandingly. “You never did show much of the prospector’s fever, Mitch. Handley and I have wondered about that.”

Mitch peered at him, querulously. “No hard feelings?”

Rouchak laughed. “Me? No, Mitch; you don’t belong out on the rings of Saturn, scooping radioactives up in a bucket-scooter, anyway!”

“Thanks, Karl.” Mitch glanced at his wrist-dial, then twisted and looked at the ship’s chronometer. “Time I contacted the shuttle,” he said, and moved over to the communications screen.



The shuttle-freighter from Earth was a massive vessel of big drive rockets and voluminous fuel-tanks. It was designed to blast off a planet’s surface with a heavy cargo in its hold. It came gliding out of space and snuggled up to the side of the giant *Orion*

Girl, different from her in that she was designed to load and discharge her cargo on an orbit, and land on a planet only with empty holds. Her rockets were set for long interplanetary runs, not for blasting her hull off a planet’s surface.

As the shuttle snicked alongside, grappling with magnetic plates, the shuttle’s crew emerged in spacesuits and entered the *Orion Girl’s* airlock. Loading record and bill of sale were checked, and the crew began transferring the *Orion Girl’s* precious cargo to the shuttle for shipment down to Earth. It was standard procedure for interplanetary shipping; the ships always met in orbits off the Moon. An orbit around Earth was never used, since orbits were too ticklish. A five-hundred-ton space freighter could demolish a city.

HANDLEY’S short, bulky figure was framed in the doorway as Mitch hustled about his stateroom, packing his duffel. A spaceman’s duffel was a seven-foot-long, rigid plastic shell; it accommodated his spacesuit, his personal belongings, his wardrobe, and—when there were accidents in space—his corpse.

“Going to buy yourself that little house in the North American Rockies and settle down, Mitch?” Handley drawled plaintively.

“Yeah,” Mitch agreed. “Going to relax and let the world go by, Handley—and the other worlds, too.” He folded his spare uniform neatly and stowed it in the cylinder. “No more riding the ’scope and gauges, dreaming about some beautiful dame I only wish I’d met; no more wallowing around in Saturn’s rings, spacesuited and strapped to the saddle of a bucket-scooter.”

Handley shifted his weight, uncomfortably. “Rouchak and I plan to build our fortune and start a passenger spaceline,” he said dully. “Guess we’ll be lucky to live through it,

though—old Saturn's sure to gobble one of us!"

"Just scoop up a little too much in a scooter's hamper, that's all it needs," Mitch confirmed busily. "Just a little too much mass to jockey on your rockets, and Saturn'll pull you right out of the rings." He finished his packing, slid the cover closed on his duffel, and straightened up.

"Well—so long, Mitch." Handley shuffled forward, sticking out his hand. "It's been good knowin' you."

Mitch returned his firm grip. "Good luck, Handley."

The shuttle, under Rouchak's supervision, finished transferring the cargo and broke free, curving off among the stars on a tongue of flame. Then Rouchak joined Mitch and they climbed through an escape-hatch into the cramped compartment of the *Orion Girl's* single spaceboat. Handley shoved in Mitch's duffel and sealed the hatch. They strapped themselves into the cushions and, as the leaves of the hull parted ahead of the boat, Mitch hit the starter-button and they went hurtling off in a shallow curve. He swung the little craft back over the looming, bone-white globe of the Moon, heading toward the splinter of light that was Port Luna.

They entered the Registrar's office wearing robes and sandals; their spaceman's gray had been left behind in the Port Hospital for analysis, brown monk's robes issued to them after their medical examination.

The Registrar clerk was a shapely young girl with short-cropped red hair. She looked up with a smile as they shuffled over to her desk.

"Mitchell and Rouchak from the *Orion Girl*," Mitch told her. "Franchised and issued for prospecting on Saturn's rings. I'm Mitchell, Pilot-Astrogator; this is Rouchak, Servo Engineer."

"You're on Port Leave via spaceboat?" she asked.

Mitch nodded. "Our pay voucher is registered by Radioactives, Inc., of Toronto N.A., Earth."

"Check," she said crisply, turning to the bank of controls and viewscreen on the side of her desk. She punched keys and watched the screen. It flashed on, illuminating her attractive, pug-nosed features with its glow. "*Orion Girl*, franchised and issued to spacemen Mitchell, Rouchak, and Handley for prospecting radioactives, vicinity of Saturn?"

"Handley's aboard, standing orbit watch," Mitch confirmed.

"Uh huh. Medical has registered your identification," she informed him. "Radioactives of Toronto has acknowledged your cargo and—" She punched more keys. "—Yes! Here's your pay voucher: seventy-five thousand credits. Want it in cash?"

"Transferred to our accounts," Mitch replied. "Twenty-five thousand each."

She scribbled a notation on her desk pad. "It'll be transferred by tomorrow morning, chronolog time. Your duffel has been cleared by Decontamination, Mr. Mitchell—pick it up as you leave."

"There's one other thing," Mitch said. "I want to resign from the *Orion Girl's* franchise."

The girl looked up quickly. "You're resigning?"

"That's right."

Frowning, she glanced at Rouchak. "What about you?"

"I'll remain in Port Luna until another Pilot-Astrogator is available," Rouchak replied gruffly.

"You realize, of course, that the *Orion Girl's* release is cancelled until you have a complete crew—"

Rouchak nodded. "I'm aware of it."

She avoided their gaze with embarrassment. "Mr. Mitchell, have you any reason to state for resigning from the franchise?"

"I've accumulated a saving of two hundred thousand credits," Mitch replied easily. "I'm retiring from space."

She jerked her eyes up, staring at him in surprise. "Retiring? But—you're only thirty years old! Isn't that—well, it seems rather early—"

"I'm my own boss," Mitch said. "Starting now."

She stared at him a moment longer, then turned back to her screen with a shrug of indifference. "All right," she muttered half to herself. "They ought to have assigned *you* to Explorations!"

Mitch grinned tightly as she punched keys with defiant fingers. The girl stared at her screen, her brow creased prettily in thought, then she looked up again, coldly critical. "You aren't available for further employment?"

Mitch started to shake his head; then hesitated, curious. "What sort of employment?"

She gestured at the screen. "Your psycho-data says you have good moral conscience, if uninhibited. There's a Miss Eileen Graham of Venus who's been issued a Commercial Agent franchise on a space-cruiser—she needs an experienced spaceman as crew—"

"On a space-cruiser?" Mitch asked dubiously. "She wants a female crew, doesn't she? Those boats accommodate only two people with any comfort—"

"She wants a man, because there's some sort of personal danger involved. Her business is Molecular Transmutors, manufacturers of air renewers—they have Commercial charter for Mars, Venus, and Mercury. I understand her father pioneered air renewers."

Mitch raised critical brows. "What's the personal danger in that?"

"You'll have to ask her," the clerk replied coolly. "Are you interested in the job?"

"Not particularly." Mitch returned her stare.

The girl sighed her resignation and flicked the screen off. "Very well, then; that's all."

MITCH CALLED a hotel, made a reservation, and arranged to have his duffel delivered there. Then he and Rouchak, dressed in their ship-worn spaceman's gray, departed from the long, circular buildings of Port Authority which curved around the base of the dome facing the spaceport field. They strode along the walkways into the maze of tall, glass-walled buildings that rose like slabs to the huge, crystal dome overhead. The walkways curved and swirled among the buildings, tunneled through them, rose and fell on countless escalators to more than a dozen floor-levels.

Port Luna was the first domed city to be built on another world by Man. As such, it was somewhat outdated by the great, domed metropoli which had since been built on Mars, Venus, Mercury, and the Jovian and Saturnian Moons. In Port Luna, there were no swirling trafficways with the bright motes of little cars whisking along them; in Port Luna, if you went anywhere, you walked.

It was easy walking. In the Moon's light gravity, a 180-lb. man weighed only 35-lbs.—you could skip lightly along the walkways, if it weren't for the crowds of pedestrians you'd pile into!

Mitch and Rouchak wandered leisurely through the crowds, their eyes drinking in the sights with a hunger that sprang from the loneliness of spaceship life. There was plenty of color to stir adventure in a man's blood; as the interplanetary trade-center for Earth, Port Luna was the crossroads of nearly a dozen other planets.

The group of seven-foot-tall, bulgingly muscular men who strode past, wearing loose, drab green coveralls with strong hands and features having a skin like white milk—hunters and trappers of Venus, they! Come from the deep wilderness and backwoods of the planet that lay dark and wet beneath an eternal blanket of writhing mists.

And there, the plump, little man with his beautiful wife, both with the milk-white skin, but dressed in loose, silken garments of gaudy hues—they, too, were from Venus. He was a well-to-do merchant, or excutive, or plantation-owner who lived in one of the luxurious, domed cities.

Here came a group of medium-height, bone-slender women with skin the color of dark mahogany, their firm-fleshed bodies almost completely naked save for the bits of clothing worn here and there. Light bands on their skin about the waist showed where tool-belts had been worn—they were a vacationing group of girl engineers from the sprawling factories of Mars, here to forget glowing screens and signal-lights and long catwalks over massive rows of humming machines serviced by gangs of robots. On Mars, you wore more than a mere helmet when you ventured out on the cold, windy surface beyond the domed cities; you wore furs, from neck to foot, and you *didn't* wear any garment under them that would become absorbed with perspiration and chafe the skin. In Mars' thin, dry air, that was certain invitation to painful skin rash and boils. The Martian settlers had long become accustomed to scant costumes for casual indoor wear.

Yonder was a trio of husky, proud men in snug fur garments unzipped and thrown open over hairy chests—they were from either the Jovian or Saturnian Moons, where you had to wear a heated, insulated suit if you left the domed cities to venture out on the chill, freezing surface.

All around were the quiet, sophisticated people from Earth, men in skin-tight breeches and loose blouses, the women in tight bodices and short, flared skirts, all immaculate and fashionable. The life-long citizens of Port Luna could be discerned by their darker, bronzed skin—burned dark by the sunlight blazing down through the dome.

And there were stores and shops

and gay display windows, theaters and restaurants and hotel marquees, apartment buildings and office buildings—all that made up a trade metropolis. It was civilization; it was people; it was home to the young men and women in spaceman's gray, on Port Leave from giant space freighters orbiting about the Moon or sleek, powerful spaceliners standing out on the spaceport field.

Crossroads of the Solar System.

And there was the glowing, glass-brick front of the *Spacemen's Bar*. Inside, was the congenial, shadowy taproom, the pile of glass and bottles behind the bar where a model of the *Earth Queen*, first ship to reach Mars, stood on its tail-fins...and the mustachioed bartender would have you know that expedition was planned in this very bar, right over there in that corner booth! Ah, there were *men* in those days—Earth overpopulated and living in squalor, mankind needing to spread to the other worlds or starve—

A gang of squat, husky miners from Mercury lined the bar, their hair slicked down, wizened features scrubbed, their bearlike figures garbed in Earth costume. Two attractive girls in spaceman's gray shared the bar with them, sang a ribald song in chorus.

MITCH AND Rouchak deposited themselves in a wall booth and dialed their drinks, which were promptly ejected through little panels at their elbow. They fingered tall, cool glasses, listened to the song, and grinned at one another. Without a word, they raised their glasses in silent toast.

"Think you can sit back and retire while Handley and I are out making our fortunes?" Rouchak asked half-jokingly.

Mitch frowned and shook his head. "My retirement isn't going to be just to sit back and do nothing, Rouchak. Blazes, man—that's all I've been doing for seven years, barring emer-

gencies! Sitting back, watching 'scope and gauges, and letting a steel can run itself across space—I'm just bone-weary *tired* of it!" He grimaced at the thought. "When I get me a little bungalow on Earth, I'm going to spend the rest of my time seeing all the pageants and festivals, the tourist spots and historical sites of old mother Earth."

"So *that's* why you read so many of those Earth travel-folders!" Rouchak laughed.

"Earth history's my pet subject, damn it!" Mitch growled protestingly. "And d'you know that's the basis for most of the tourist trade on Earth?"

"Oh-oh! Here we go again—"

"Well, it's true! You live anywhere on Earth, you put on a pageant and show how people lived in your neck of the woods in its heyday. Tourists come from all over Earth and from the other worlds to see it! Now, every Indian Summer—fall, that is—there's an outdoor festival in North America where they dress like the early Americans and go archery hunting in the forests, on foot and horseback, and camp out in wigwams—"

"I'd rather take a tour through one of the Arctic industrial centers and watch the robots handle those big factories!"

"You'll see more around Antarctic Spaceport. Robots handling all the shuttle-freighter shipping that comes in from space—" Mitch snorted. "I'll take the European spring pageants, where you see people wearing those medieval costumes and riding in coaches around in those old fortress cities, and kings holding court in their castles, and knights in armor enacting famous battles—"

"What about the yearly outdoor caravans put on in the Middle East? I've *heard* about them!" Rouchak grinned. "Arab horsemen raiding villages for captive girls; camping in tents under the desert stars; old walled cities with their bazaars and slave markets; Caliphs holding court

in their big palaces with harem girls dancing—"

"If you want a sexy show, they know how to give one!" Mitch conceded. "But what about the winter festivals in the African villages and the lion hunts? Or the summer pageants in the famous old Chinese merchant cities?"

"I'll take the strip-teasers in the Persian slave-markets!" Rouchak laughed. "Do they actually buy those girls, though?"

Mitch shook his head, grinning. "If you outbid the local crowd and win a girl, you get to take her to dinner afterward in one of those little Oriental restaurants—she'll hold your hand while you smoke a water-pipe and watch a bevy of other strip-teasers go through their routine, I understand. After that, you're on your own."

"Now, *there* is an evening!"

"Yeah," Mitch laughed. "Why d'you think I'm *retiring*?"

Rouchak gazed at him through a moment of musing silence, then gave a faint head-shake. "You won't stay long, Mitch. You'll come back—space doesn't give up her children that easily!"



"And then, in South America—"

Rouchak threw up his hands in defeat.

MITCH ARRIVED at his hotel feeling somewhat dispirited and lonely. The liquor inside him had served to give warmth and good nature to his parting with Rouchak. But now that the goodbyes and well-wishes had been said, and the tall blond spaceman had gone his way, Mitch felt the loss of companionship; liquor didn't lull the feeling.

He confirmed his reservation at the desk, went up to his suite, and unpacked his duffel. He laid out a clean, fresh suit of spaceman's gray, slipped out of his shipworn suit, and took a brisk shower. He was standing before the bathroom mirror, a towel wrapped about his thighs, shaving the faint beard-stubble from his face, when the door chimed rang softly.

Grunting dourly, he snapped the electric razor back into its niche and strode in through the living room. He pressed the stud and the door slid into the wall.

She was startled, at first, then her dark gaze narrowed and she surveyed his slender, brown figure slowly, from head to foot. Her lips pouted appreciatively and she gave a soft, low whistle.

Mitch returned her gaze with a casualness that amounted to indifference. She was small, graceful, firm-fleshed, with curly black hair that framed her oval features in an ebony halo. Her skin was a milky white transparency—the stamp of Venus. She wore a filmy blue tunic that reached to her thighs, with silver embroidery over the right places. Her small feet were poised in tiny silver-lacework sandals.

"You—are Pilot-Astrogator James Mitchell?" she inquired musically.

"Well-l-l—I hope that towel doesn't slip! But your psycho-chart said you have a good moral conscience, with just a little inhibition; so I suppose you could ask me—in—offer me a drink! So why don't you?"

Mitch arched a brow, incredulously. *What sort of come-on was this?* Then he shrugged, stepped back, and waved her to enter the room. "Come in," he said mockingly. "Have a drink."

"Thanks." She moved past him, smiling faintly. "Don't mind if I do—and don't let me interfere with anything you're doing!"

Mitch thumbed the door shut and turned to watch her slide into a chair, crossing her shapely knees. "I'm shav-

ing at the moment," he said. "Be right with you." His thumb hooked toward the dispenser against the wall. "Liquor's there," he added, then padded on back to the bathroom.

AS HE EMERGED, shaved and dressed, a few minutes later, his visitor was standing over at the window-wall, drink in hand, admiring the view of towering glass-walled buildings, the stark crater rims of the Moon beyond the dome, the black sky pierced with burning stars and the glowing, blue-green bauble of Earth.

"Quite a view!" she remarked forcibly. "You must pay a nice chunk of rent for this lay-out!"

"I can afford it," he retorted in a dry tone that dismissed the inconsequential. "Why were you checking my psycho-chart at Port Authority?" he asked bluntly.

"For the same reason I wish you couldn't afford this view," she replied; then she turned to face him. "My name's Eileen Graham, Mr. Mitchell."

"Umm?" He frowned. "Oh—you're the Eileen Graham who wants to hire a spaceman!"

"Exactly." She looked down at the drink in her hand. "I must visit Earth, Mars, Venus, and Mercury on business, Mr. Mitchell, and it won't wait. I must find a pilot for my cruiser as quickly as possible, and it must be a man."

"Why?" Mitch crossed to the dispenser and dialed himself a drink.

"Because someone might try to kill me." She lifted her gaze and looked at him, levelly. "I think they've tried to, already."

The frosted glass slid from the dispenser and Mitch picked it up, taking a long, cool sip of the mellow concoction—Venusian rum, Titan water, Earth pineapple juice. He returned her look, quizzically. "You're from Venus, Miss Graham; you know every man who goes to the other worlds is automatically granted a gun permit."

"This isn't some drunken pleg-

hunter trying to settle a grudge," she retorted. "Besides, women don't end their quarrels by shooting it out on the street—most of them don't, anyway. This is more in the nature of a stab in the back in a dark alley, Mr. Mitchell."

Mitch strolled over and settled himself in a chair. He produced cigarettes and offered them to her. She accepted one, gracefully, and he took another. "You aren't exactly giving me any good reason to consider the job," he said critically.

"I'd want you to understand what you're up against," she replied frankly. "Also, you asked me why I need a man instead of a woman."

Mitch blew smoke at the window-wall and scowled. "Well, you shouldn't have too much trouble hiring someone here in Port Luna," he refuted her, irritably. "Why bother me? I'm retired and not even looking for employment!"

"I've tried to hire several spacemen," she answered quietly. "And I'm offering five thousand credits for the job—more than the commercial space-lines are offering! But they've either turned me down or—well, in the last case, I'd hardly gotten out on the walkways with him when he started pawing me." She turned and went back to the window-wall. "I told Port Authority about it. That's why they let me see the psycho-charts on any spaceman who might be available; that's why I came to you."

Mitch scrutinized her firm, rounded little posterior with interest. "You've got the stuff for pawing; I'll say that much!" he muttered wryly. "So you think you could spend a few months cooped up in a space cruiser with me and not regret it afterward, do you?"

"I think I could handle you."

He winced, and wondered how he could get rid of her—there'd be plenty of other lovely-looking gals on Earth. Then, vaguely, he wondered if he wanted to get rid of her! A bird in hand....

HE GAVE A slight start as she began turning around the second time. She was leaning against the transparent wallplate, pressing her flesh to it and rolling herself around. She faced him with tilted chin, looking down at him through lowered lashes. She moved her palms up her thighs, looking at him. "I could handle you," she repeated, whispering. "I could make you want me—"

"Is that how you got the guy who pawed you?"

She stiffened, then relaxed again. "No, I haven't done this before. But I need you—a man like you—I need you with me. I want you with me." She pushed away from the wallplate and moved toward him.

Mitch set his drink aside, placed his cigarette in an ashtray, and rose. In a smooth, deft motion, he stepped forward, embraced her, and pressed his lips against hers.

Then he released her and stepped back. "Is that what you wanted?"

She teetered before him, her features slack. Then she whirled back to the window-wall, picked up her cigarette and drink from the hand-rail where she'd left them. "I guess I can't vamp you into it, either," she murmured huskily. "You aren't to be fooled by an amateur."

"Maybe you quit trying too soon," he reproved, moving up behind her. He grasped her arms at her sides, standing close to her. "Try me some more," he said softly.

She stood perfectly still for a moment, then twisted from his grasp and away. "That was a mistake," she said. "You don't believe me, now. You think I'm—well, never mind—"

"If you were," he said, turning to follow her with his gaze, "I wouldn't be standing here empty-handed. You're doing all right, baby; I know you're in trouble, now."

She stopped, giving him her wide-eyed stare. "I can't wait much longer to find someone—I've got to get out

there and find out what's wrong! I do need your help—"

"Why not the Colonial Police?"

She shook her head. "There isn't any proof. I—I'm not sure there's really any danger! But I've got to find out—"

He peered at her narrowly. "It can wait long enough to have dinner with me, can't it? Then you can tell me about it."

"You mean—that's on the level?"

"It's on the level," he said, thinking, *If you are!*



"I NEVER quite realized that Colonial Control was so tremendous!" Eileen Graham exclaimed in awed tones.

Dinner was finished, the dishes cleared away. They relaxed over coffee and cigarettes at a small, secluded table against the balcony rail, in a little open-air restaurant perched on an observation ledge, high up on the sheer side of a glass-walled building. It was commonly called a garden restaurant, with potted plants, bushes, and flowers scattered about and the soft, tinkling of music of an electronic string console flowing through the murmur of conversation. Patrons were clustered about the small tables set in neat rows and little three-wheeled robots with four mechanical arms rolled silently about, serving the customers and pausing when the waitress-operator switched on the tiny viewscreens to take orders.

"They're certainly particular about who has a spaceship, aren't they!" Eileen remarked quietly, gazing out over the rail.

Mitch followed her gaze and grinned complacently. "They've good reason to be particular," he said. "A single gang of cut-throats in one spaceship with a few contraband atomic weapons

could destroy the major cities of any world in the Solar System. Just by threatening it, they could demand and get practically anything they wanted."

"They have a Space Fleet, haven't they?"

"Oh, naturally—but space is big, and I hope we never see the day they have to use the Space Fleet. They have it only in case someone should manage to hijack a ship from some spaceport." Mitch shook his head, disconsolately. "But if there's ever any interplanetary piracy, it'll be murder!"

Eileen stared down from their observation-ledge with rapt fascination. Below them, the giant dome curved down to its base; outside, the gray Lunar plain was clustered with giant gleaming spaceships—bulky Earth-Moon shuttles, bullet-shaped spaceboats, slender cruisers and long, sleek space-liners.

All spaceships were the property of Colonial Control, under the Interplanetary Laws of the United Nations. Ships were franchised only to those commercial interests which had the official approval of the government: corporations, freight companies, space-line agencies, and groups of private individuals such as explorers, scientists, prospectors and independent traders. Everything had to be on the line, for government inspection at any time, before anyone could buy a franchise on any spaceship.

Even then, no company or group of individuals were issued a spaceship to run as they pleased. They had to hire spacemen and women who had been carefully screened, selected, and trained at the U.N. Space Academy—no one else was permitted to handle the controls of a spaceship. As a result, individuals who bought franchises on spaceships for independent purposes had to be spacemen, or had to have the capital to hire spacemen for their ship's crew; otherwise, it was no dice.

"Do you think there'll ever be free trade among the planets?" Eileen

asked absently, after a sip of her coffee.

"It's very doubtful until all the other worlds become thoroughly self-sufficient and more completely settled," Mitch replied. He took a leisurely drag on his cigarette, then added, "Some big corporations don't like it."

Eileen looked perplexed. "What do you mean?"



"They'd like a free hand to develop commercial interests on other planets—run their own spacecraft, handle their own business without government control. They have a legitimate gripe, too—government control can often be snarled with red-tape, especially on large business deals," Mitch grimaced wryly. "The fact remains, though, that the settlers on Mars and Venus and the Jovian Moons aren't self-sufficient; they need things from Earth. Without some of those things, they wouldn't remain alive very long. So these spaceships are a life-line, millions of lives depend on their use. You can't turn a thing like that loose for the private ambitions of individuals; too many lives depend on those spaceships."

"By and large, I think private industry respects that responsibility," she argued dubiously.

Mitch gave a grim nod. "By and large—but not entirely! There are a few bad lemons in the lot—there always are—and the mismanagement of one, single cargo of provisions for another world could easily cost the lives of a few thousand settlers." He scowled in faint boredom, sipped his coffee, and said, "Suppose we talk about you, now? What's all this trouble you're having?"

His gaze was direct and inquiring. Eileen met it squarely. "I am a representative of private industry, Mr.

Mitchell—and something's wrong with my company. I don't know what it is or how it got started, and I think someone's trying to keep me from finding out, but—well, suppose I start at the beginning—"

SHE GAVE him the complete story, starting with her father. Old John Howard Graham had been one of the early settlers on Venus, a biochemist with a smattering of experience in applied physics.

He had studied the work being done by Earth scientists on a mechanism which could transmute carbon dioxide back into oxygen and nitrogen, as plant-life did, at such a rate that a man who exhaled a breath inside a sealed helmet would have that breath converted back into breathable air—thus making it possible for him to venture forth on the other planets without carrying tanked air to breathe, or worrying about how long he was out and how much air supply he had left.

Graham had succeeded in developing a workable molecular transmutor—or, as it was more commonly called, an air-renewer. He had patented it with the Colonial Authority on Venus and, with government supervision, succeeded in forming a corporation on Earth for the manufacture of air-renewers. The corporation, *Molecular Transmutors, Inc.* had to be on Earth to have supplementary technical and research companies it could sub-contract for the various parts of the highly intricate air-renewers. Such technical and research companies simply didn't exist on Venus or other planets.

Naturally, *Molecular Transmutors* won the commercial franchise to sell air-renewers on Mars, Venus, and Mercury—the planets then being colonized. Several other corporations had since developed modified versions of the air-renewers to fit the special conditions of Jovian and Saturnian Moons, thus winning those franchises.

Graham, himself, had remained on Venus, running his corporation through

the Board of Trustees on Earth, until the contraction of a Venusian virus infection forced him to return to Earth for medical treatment. His wife and daughter remained on Venus, where Eileen was studying Venusian economics.

Graham had intended to return to Venus, but the virus kept him under medical care for several years—and then, it finally won out. When he died, Eileen—whose mother had died the year before—was sole heir to the corporation.

She knew quite a bit about it, since her father had continued to send her the quarterly reports from Earth for his personal files at home. She had noticed that the business had gone into a gradual slump shortly after her father's illness. In the one last report she had received shortly before her father died, she saw that the gradual slump had become a nose-dive; stockholders had begun selling out corporation in droves.

George Kimball was head of the Board of Trustees on Earth; George was the son of one of her father's old friends—long-since deceased—which had considerable bearing on the fact that her father had hired George. The slump had begun a few months after Kimball joined the corporation.

Eileen had contacted Kimball from Venus, saying that she was coming to Earth to take over her father's position. Kimball had written back that she needn't bother, that the corporation was in good hands, that she needn't come to Earth—in short, that her meddling wasn't wanted. She immediately applied for a passage visa and wired Mr. Kimball that she was on her way.

Then the trouble started. She was shopping for the trip when someone broke into her home and burglarized it—taking along her passage visa with the silverware, oddly enough; the visa was abruptly cancelled and was therefore worthless as soon as she reported the theft. She had to wait two weeks to get a second visa.

Finally, she was on her way to the spaceport. Three men dressed as hunters caught up with her on a street, molested her, and forced her into an alleyway. Holding her, they ripped open the small luggage she was allowed on the space trip and took her visa. Then they began beating her. Fortunately, her screams had already attracted attention—a gang of spacemen came storming to the rescue and thoroughly punished the three hoodlums. Her visa was restored, she was hustled to the spaceport, and she just barely managed to catch the space-liner before it took off.

Then, on the long trip to Port Luna, someone planted an incendiary bomb in her stateroom. She just happened to be away from it when it exploded, though two passengers in the adjoining stateroom were severely burned. The captain put it down as the trick of burglars intent upon destroying all evidence of their theft; Port Authority, when they had arrived at Port Luna, had concurred—and no one could be arrested because there simply wasn't any proof.

Eileen was stranded—her visa was destroyed in the blast, but she was entered on the ship's voucher—alone in Port Luna without clothes, without money, without friends. Port Authority had contacted Kimball for her. Kimball had forwarded money and a blunt order that she return to Venus. Using the money, she hired an attorney and started court action to make Kimball give her access to the corporation funds. Kimball had to comply.

THAT WAS the whole situation. She had no idea why the corporation's business had fallen off—the reports her father sent her had mentioned no traceable cause—and she had no proof that the criminal attacks upon her had anything to do with the corporation.

"But I intend to find out!" she concluded grimly. "Kimball is going to discover that he isn't dealing with any lamebrained, pampered female before I'm through with him."

"It smells," Mitch muttered comprehensively. "It smells to high heaven! Those criminal attacks could have been coincidence, and the corporation troubles could have a legitimate reason—but why would this Kimball refuse to tell you about it?"

"That's what has me puzzled," Eileen agreed. "But now you know why I've bought a commercial agent franchise on a space cruiser and why I want a spaceman to go with me."

Mitch gazed at her, critically. "You realize I must check all this with Port Authority," he said mildly.

She arched a brow, then gave a nod of indifference. "The Port Police will confirm what happened on the space-liner—the *Stellar Queen*—and Port Authority will confirm the rest. The Colonial Police have the complete facts, too, but there's nothing they can do. There just isn't anything you could pin on anybody!"

"I'll make a few calls and check on it," Mitch decided curtly, and reached for the check. "Let's go."

"Will you take me home, first?" she asked, rising. "You can call from my apartment, if you like. I'm rather tired—"

"All right."

SHE LED him across the city to a tall, modern apartment building and up to a blue-walled corridor on the thirtieth floor. They passed the white doors at the foyer and went back along the corridor to a secluded door. "Have you ever tasted a Venus Milkshake?" she asked, taking a tiny electrokey from the purse at her waist.

"A sort've milky fruit cocktail, isn't it?" he replied; "I've heard of it."

"Delicious!" she said, smiling tiredly. She opened the door and led him inside. "I'll fix you one."

They entered a compact, gleaming kitchenette with an adjoining, glass-walled breakfast nook. Mitch strolled over and gazed out the thin, adjustable glass windowpanes. There was a deep

recess in the side of the building, with the slick blue tinted-glass walls extending in a sheer drop to the bottom of the recess, five floors below, where a ledge jutted outward holding a kidney-shaped swimming pool and a green strip of a park along its outer edge. There were several people swimming.

Eileen had opened the refrigerator and was taking out several weird, colorful Venusian fruits. "It'll take a few minutes," she said apologetically.

"Then I may as well get those calls done with," he surmised.



"All right, the 'phone is in the living room—go right through," she agreed readily.

He passed through a circular opening and strolled down a short hallway past a rose-and-green bedroom. The living-room was gray and mirror-chrome and glass trimmed with scarlet. He crossed over to the videophone, which had its screen in a small, glassed-in alcove seat recessed into one wall. He slid in and closed the glass portal, then fingered the screen's keyboard.

Both the Port Police and the Registrar's office at Port Authority confirmed Eileen's story, though they had no details to add. Mitch put a call through to the Colonial Police and talked with a blue-uniformed captain for a while; no, there wasn't a thing they could do unless there was definite proof pointing to the interplanetary conspiracy. The Venus Police had uncovered no evidence to that effect. Miss Graham had merely been the victim of known criminals—it could have been anybody.

Mitch thanked the captain and broke connection. He opened the portal and climbed out the alcove before he noticed that it was peculiarly quiet

in the apartment. No sound whatever came from the direction of the kitchenette.

Frowning querulously, he strode back along the short hallway and stepped through to the glassed-in breakfast nook.

The first thing he saw was the gun.

IT WAS a .257mm Bennington sealed-beam atomic blaster, a shiny, streamlined tube that snuggled along the top of a man's fist and could burn a needle-sized hole through you that released enough heat to cook your intestines to a thin soup. Recommended for the Venusian swamp-jungles, where something big as a house and all teeth might come thundering out of the dark mists to gobble you up; also for Io, where a particularly large and vicious species of spider roamed the darkness.

But outlawed as a weapon in any domed city—particularly in Port Luna, where you weren't even permitted to carry a weapon.

The fist that held it was rock-steady, the skin alabaster white. The man behind it was from Venus—a husky, tough-looking character with close-cropped brown hair and cold, black little eyes set wide apart in a square chunk of face. He stood braced in the center of the kitchenette, pointing the blaster at Mitch's chest.

Another Venusian, a tall, skinny character with a long face and, thin, delicate hands, sat on the stool in the corner. A fat, muscular companion stood beside him; neither was armed.

Near the door, a Venusian seven feet tall and half as wide had his thick arms wrapped firmly around Eileen's figure, holding her in a vise-like grip that didn't allow the least bit of a struggle. His broad hand was clamped over her mouth. She stared at Mitch, her eyes wide, dark pools glistening with terror.

Well, she'd warned him!

All four Venusians wore the gaudy, thin silken costume of well-to-do Venus merchants—as if they had dropped in for a business chat.

There was a moment of complete silence as Mitch stood frozen in the doorway, then the man with the gun spoke. "I think you should raise your hands," he said.

Mitch raised them slowly to shoulder-height. You don't argue with a Bennington blaster.

"Frisk him," the man said.

Skinny climbed off the stool and sidled around the room, keeping well out of the line of fire. His sensitive hands slithered down Mitch's body. "He's clean," Skinny said.

"Excellent." Bennington boy nodded. "Now, spaceman, what is your name?"

"Mitchell," Mitch answered. Skinny went sidling away from him.

"Very well, Mitchell," said Bennington boy. "It pains me to do this, but I'm sure you will understand—let me explain. Miss Graham and I were really very good friends on Venus—very, very good friends. I am deeply concerned with her personal welfare, you see; it's sort of as if she were my own, personal property."

He paused, his little eyes glittering. "You are beginning to understand, Mr. Mitchell? It embarrasses me deeply to come here to Miss Graham's apartment and find you alone with her; I'm afraid I must take certain steps to rectify this situation."

He looked Mitch over very thoroughly, from head to toe. Mitch stiffened, but kept his arms raised, saying nothing.

Bennington boy gave a barely perceptible nod. "Finish it," he said.

SKINNY'S bony fist came whistling out of nowhere and cracked Mitch behind the ear. He stumbled forward, and Skinny's partner rushed him, fists pumping. A fine set of steel knuckledusters slammed against Mitch's mouth, splitting his lip; blood gushed from his nose.

He cut loose with a neat roundhouse that sent Skinny's partner back where he came from, then jerked erect as a foot thudded into his kidney. Long,

slender fingers clamped about his throat from behind; then Skinny's partner came back, his foot lashing out. The kick landed in Mitch's stomach, and air whistled up his throat as the room exploded in pinwheel fireworks.

He slumped to the floor, tore loose from Skinny's choking grasp, grabbed an arm, and pivoted. Skinny rose and fell into his partner's lap and they tumbled back across the kitchenette to collide with Bennington boy. There was some confusion for a moment.

Mitch took advantage of it. He whirled and hurled himself straight at the glass panes of the breakfast nook. He went through with a splintering crash, fell outward into the empty nothingness, and turned over and over as he plunged toward the ledge below.

The swimming-pool rose up and water struck him with an impact that jolted every bone and muscle. Waves of stinging pain tore through him. When his battered, bleeding face broke the surface, he caught a glimpse of frightened faces peering out at him from the edge of the pool. A husky, brown body arched outward in a graceful dive. Voices were shouting excitedly. Mitch caught the word "spaceman" and grinned through his cracked lips before the water closed over him again.

Bennington boy was in for trouble!

It wasn't simply that such a disturbance would bring the Port Police on the run—it might be several minutes before they got there. It was the spaceman's gray Mitch wore.

There was respect for that gray from one end of the Solar System to the other. The settlers of the other worlds knew their lives depended on the giant spaceships that brought their supplies from Earth—and on the gray-clad men who ran those spaceships. It was a general custom that spaceman on Port Leave were never molested. When a man wore that gray, he was to be treated with appreciation.

Many criminal did make a space-

man is victim, the reaction of the settlers was immediate: that criminal was mobbed. Whether it was Marsport or Venus City or no farther from Earth than Port Luna, the code of space was maintained—attack a spaceman and you should be killed! No official protection was necessary for the men and women in gray.

●

But Mitch was getting official protection, whether he liked it or not, an hour later as he sat in the office of the Commissioner of the Port Police, with a grizzled, old doctor patching his face back together with strips of adhesive.

"There you are," the doc said. "Be good as new in a week. Just take it easy for a few days—you'll stop aching sooner."

"Thanks," Mitch growled laconically.

Commissioner McKeever gave him a stoic grin from behind the big, broad desk. "And that's the story this gunman gave you?" he asked conclusively.

"That's it," Mitch conceded, rising. He winced as the doc helped him back into his blouse. "You caught the guy, didn't you?"

McKeever snorted. "We caught a dead corpse with its skull caved in and a howling Mercurian miner waving a bloody lamp-base over it. The big Venus-boy is dead, too; the other two are beaten so badly they aren't able to talk yet."

Mitch grinned. "Guess they had 'em a ball!"

"Whole gang of these Mercury boys busted into the place before we got there," McKeever explained bitterly. "Miss Graham was slapped around a couple of times until they got wise that she was a prisoner, too." He peered narrowly at Mitch. "How do you feel about this claim that our gunner-pal was chummy with Miss Graham back on Venus?"

Mitch crinkled his taped brow in a scowl. "I don't know, Commish, what has Miss Graham to say?"



"Says she never saw the character before, naturally." McKeever was sarcastic. "Of course, there's no proof either way; you can take it or leave it alone."

"Thanks for the tip." Mitch zipped up his blouse and turned to leave.

"She's waiting outside," McKeever called after him. "Have fun."

Mitch walked carefully through the door, with the old doc's assistance, as if he were trodding on eggs. Each movement sent a twinge of pain through his bruised muscles. They entered the outer anteroom and Eileen came forward to meet him with quick uncertain steps. "Are you all right?" she asked tensely.

"I'm fine," he drawled harshly. "C'mon, let's get out of here."

She took his arm and walked him to the door. The doc stood back and watched them leave.

They emerged into the hurrying bustle of the crowded walkways, and paused, Mitch looking down at her. "You want to get down to Earth and talk to that Kilroy character, don't you?"

"You mean George Kimball?"

"I mean George Kimball. Can you get packed and arrange clearance for that space cruiser? I'll be down to sign on as spaceman as soon as I pack my duffel."

She stared up at him, wide-eyed, for a moment. Then she rose on tip-toe and kissed his cheek, quickly. "All right!" she whispered. "I'll be waiting—"

Then she turned and ran.

metal walls and massive laceworks of steel girders with the bright blobs of white lights marching along the ceiling, in a vast subterranean web out from the domed city, under the soft pumice of the Lunar plain. Powerful lifts rose and settled from squat block-houses on the surface, from which curved metal tubes telescoped to the airlock openings in the hulls of giant spaceships. Conveyor-belts rolled cargo through the tubes, dropped it on the lifts which lowered and deposited it on conveyor belts which carried it back along the vast tunnels to huge ware-houses beneath the domed city.

There was the throbbing of huge turbines here, the deep-throated hum of machinery, the clatter-and-bang of cargo crates, the scream of generators. Giant robots worked with mechanical precision; naked human bodies glistened with sweat, muscles rippling in the harsh light. Control panel-lights blinked red, green, yellow, and blue, signal gongs clangored shrilly.

Mitch strolled along the walkway with the plastic shell of his duffel balanced across his shoulder. His gaze flickered up at the signs mounted at each lift-shaft, where the name of the spaceship on the field above was scrawled. He moved on past the thunderous roar, on into the still, echoing extremities of the tunnels. He finally spotted Eileen's shapely figure standing with a trim, blue-uniformed Customs official at the foot of a lift shaft ahead. The sign said *Trinket*.

Mitch grinned as he strode forward; he'd recognized the smooth curve of Miss Graham's hips immediately, though she changed from her short costume to a filmy green pajama suit—travelling clothes, he supposed. It fit like a glove over her hips and was loose everywhere else.

She blushed and laughed silently before his direct gaze. The Customs official turned with raised, quizzical brows. "Mister Mitchell, is it?" he asked. "Signed aboard yet?"

THE LOADING tunnels extended underground, long caverns of flat

"Mitchell it is," Mitch answered, swinging his duffel to the floor. He fished his credentials from his pocket and handed them over. "Signed on the *Trinket*, engineer and Pilot-Astrogrator."

The official flipped the pages of the little book, nodded and handed it back. "I'll have her open in a jiff." He turned to Eileen. "Want a stevedore robot to get your luggage aboard?"

"All I have is that trunk there," she said, pointing to the lift.

"Umm," the official nodded. "Mr. Mitchell and I can handle it. Well, come on."

They stepped on the lift and rose to the blockhouse above. The official took a heavy electrokey from his belt, set it, and led the way up a sealed metal tube to the *Trinket's* airlock. Mitch noted the electrokey with a feeling of relief: he wouldn't have to worry about the *Trinket* being sabotaged. An electronic seal couldn't be broken without destroying the pendulum-lock system.

The official pressed his electrokey to the center plate in the thick airlock portal and it rotated and swung inward, silently. "All right," he said. "*Trinket's* officially issued; you know the regulations, Miss Graham. Good luck." He stepped past them and clapped Mitch on the shoulder. "I'll help you with that trunk."

They wrestled the trunk aboard and stored it in Eileen's stateroom. When the Customs man was gone, Mitch proceeded to give the craft a thorough preflight inspection from stem to stern. She was a modern, powerful ship fully equipped for space flight as well as having guide-jets and atmospheric fins for airborne planetary flights. Her generators poured on the juice smoothly; her fuel gauges registered full and her bunker rods confirmed it. The reactor drive popping its shields to a nice, bright blue glow; the smooth corridor and blue-and-silver staterooms and blondewood-and-rose forward deck salon and shimmering; chrome-trimmed control cockpit top-

side under a curved crystal blister were all streamlined, luxurious. The galley was a cook's mechanical dream-world.

Eileen was unpacking her trunk in her stateroom. Mitch paused in the open doorway. "This is home for the next few months—if we hit Mars, Venus, and Mercury," he remarked lightly. "Hope you can stand the company."

She flashed a smile over her shoulder. "Did you get your duffel?"

"Brought it in with your trunk," he said. "Ready to clear for Earth?"

"Okay!" She left things as they were and came to the doorway. "I'll ride up in the control room with you."

"Cockpit," he corrected. "This little boat couldn't spare a control room." He grinned and led the way forward to the ladderway.

STRAPPED INTO the acceleration chairs behind the broad, curved instrument bank, he contacted Lunar Control and got clearance on a Moon-Earth trajectory, feeding its components into the ship's automatics. The automatics orientated the components and flashed a blue *correct*, then switched to a soft amber glow.

"Stand by," Mitch spoke from long habit. Eileen looked at him and smiled. He kept his gaze fastened on the dials and naviradar scope.

The light changed to red. A faint murmur came from within the ship; slowly, the sleek hull lifted from the spaceport field. Fire blazed silently from her tail, the gravitons compensated for the push, and she hurtled outward into the starry blackness.

"On course, *Trinket*," the communications screen reported. "*Lunar Control clear and out.*"

Mitch relaxed with a sigh and took out his cigarettes.

Eileen looked incredulously from the black communication screen to him. "Is that all there is to it?"

He puffed a cigarette alight and wriggled a finger at the live, shivering needles on the dials before him.

"That's all if the automatics lift us clear. Have to watch 'em to see that all goes well; otherwise the ship runs itself."

"What a *soft job!*" she murmured teasingly.

"What a monotonous job, you mean! Unless some little things busts loose somewhere and you have to fix it—" He made a face at the jiggling, nervous dials. "If you're a little crazy, it helps."

Eileen reached over, took the cigarettes from his hand and accepted one for herself. Mitch swiveled his gaze, looked at her for a moment, then jerked his eyes back to the dials. "You may as well go below and turn in," he said. "We'll raise Antarctic Spaceport in eleven hours."

The *Trinket* floated motionless in black space while the Moon rolled away in the distance and the Earth became a swollen globe, brilliant blue on the sunward side and dark on the night side, except for the bright, tiny sparks of cities.

Mitch slid back the door to Eileen's stateroom with his toe, crossed the room, and clamped the breakfast tray into the wall fastening under the wide oval quartzite window. He uncovered the breakfast dishes, standing silhouetted against the burning constellations which flowed across black space, then reached for the bulkhead switch and turned the room's soft, violet glow to a rich, bright amber.

The bunk erupted in a wild upheaval of blankets and Eileen's disheveled head appeared above them. "Wha—what is it?"

"Breakfast." Mitch slid into the seat behind the breakfast tray, his back to her, and poured himself a cup of coffee. "Come and get it."

"Oh?"

The inquiry in her tone made him look around. She was sitting up in bed, clutching the covers to her bosom with bare, white arms. There was a smoothly-tapered line of creamy thigh. Mitch

turned back to his breakfast, commenced buttering his toast. "Up, grab a shower," he instructed, "get dressed, and come sit down. We're scheduled for a council of war this morning, then a course in space engineering in the cockpit—you're going to have to watch the gauges when I sleep!"

"I see. But couldn't you wait 'til I got dressed?" Her tone was coldly impersonal.

"Get dressed in the bathroom—that's the 'head' in space lingo," he instructed, indicating the chamber referred to with a wave of his knife. "Go on, now—jump up, grab some clothes, run in there and get a good, cold shower!"

"I'd rather you waited outside."

Mitch grunted. "You've been sawing logs for nine hours, kid! I've been riding the controls topside. I'm too blasted tired to argue, and I'm not going to lug this breakfast tray around—get up from there or I'll get you up!"

"Oh!" she murmured, surprised. "Yes, sir!"

There were whispery sounds of cloth and bare feet pattering across the deck. Mitch calmly hacked up his Martian *yarbs* and commenced eating.

SHE PUSHED open the door to the head and emerged, wearing a short pull-over that molded to her figure, her skin a radiant pink from the shower. Crossing the room, she scrutinized the breakfast tray and slipped into the seat across from him. "You've taken care of everything, haven't you!" she exclaimed, her tones warmly complimentary. "Martian *yarbs*. Aren't they?" She looked up, smiling. "I've never tasted them. Are they good?"

"A root vegetable with a taste like a chicken's egg," he informed her. "Try that sausage, too—it's both Earth and Venus in origin—"

She tackled her food and made complimentary sounds over it. Mitch finished, covered his dishes, and light-

ed a cigarette. Eileen looked across the tray at him, studying his bruised, discolored, tape-patched features. "How do you feel, Mr. Mitchell?"

"A little sore in spots, yet," he admitted blandly. "Incidentally, we may as well dispose of formality—"

She broke into a soft laugh. "After this morning, I certainly think we should!" Her dark eyes were mocking him. "What shall I call you? Jimmy?"

"Last names are standard in space lingo, Graham." He grinned at her. "Call me Mitch."

"All right—but I am *not* a space girl, so don't you dare call me 'Graham' like that!" she retorted haughtily. "My name's Eileen."

Mitch shrugged indifferently and flipped his cigarette ash into his coffee cup. "Now that we're acquainted, suppose we reach an understanding on what plans you have for the future," he suggested, his voice casual. "The first thing you're going to do is go see this George Kimball, right?"

She nodded. "I'm going to look over the records, too. Home offices are in Cleveland, N. A.—will you come with me or stay at Antarctic Spaceport?"

"After what's happened; I'd better come with you."

"Thanks." She paused in her eating, then, and studied him. "Did you believe that—what that gunman said about me?"

"No," he replied gently.

"Your actions this morning—they had nothing to do with that, did they?" Her expression was hurt, accusing.

"I seem to remember that when the character with the gun was talking, his oversized pal was holding you very skillfully, so you could neither move nor make a sound," Mitch told her, firmly. "I noticed at the time just how skillful that big ape was, how determined he was to keep you from talking. When the gunman made his spiel about your love affairs, I noticed that he did it without any danger of having you upset his applectart. That didn't

exactly look as if he were telling the truth."

Eileen looked surprised and pleased. "I guess I've underestimated you, Mitch! And the way you dived straight through that window-wall—" She shivered excitedly. "I hadn't even *thought* of the swimming pool down there!"

Mitch grimaced and looked out the ship's window at the stars. "Getting back to the subject," he said, "what happens after you've seen Kimball and checked the corporation records?"

She sobered reflectively. "Then I think I'll know more just what to look for—what's causing the trouble," she explained. "I'll go on from there to check our branch offices and dealers on Mars, Venus, and Mercury, getting their direct views of the situation. I'm fairly sure that will have to be done to trace down the exact cause of the trouble. It must have been well covered-up on Earth or the stockholders would've protested—and there's where the trouble must be, basically, since we've lost business on all the planets under our franchise. If it were just one planet, I'd know the trouble was there and not on Earth."

Mitch blew smoke at the window and gave a slow nod of agreement. "Okay, we'll give it a whirl."



AS THE big stratowing thrummed northward from Antarctic Spaceport, Mitch and Eileen entered the bar on the lower lounge-deck and parked themselves in a low, cushioned booth next to the curved observation-window. They sipped their drinks and watched the night-shrouded terrain of South America sweeping past forty thousand feet below. Tiny needles of light appeared where commercial centers stood and ribbons of moving sparks revealed the airway traffic of small

private craft. Mitch started the conversation by asking Eileen if she'd ever seen Earth before. . . .

She had seen it several times in her childhood, when her parents made trips to Earth, but she'd grown up on Venus. Her father had started out as a biochemical expert for the government experimental stations scattered around the planet, spending some time traveling around the backwoods and swamp-jungles on inspection tours. Her home was in Jungalia, a small domed city on the edge of the swamp jungles; she grew up among the children of the rough, hardy settlers, the families of hunters and trappers. She remembered the saloons; the drunken brawls; the gun-fights in the streets; the brothels and the prostitutes who lived in the shacks scattered around the domed city, and the raids of the local Venus Police squad when all the criminal element faded mysteriously into the swamp jungles and everything would be quiet for a few weeks. She remembered the stern, uncompromising attitude of her early education, and the consternation of her parents when she was caught playing with some of the children from Outside. She was, she said, a regular tom-boy; her parents would've been shocked at how much she really knew about Outside.

Then, when she began attending Venus University, she'd taken Venus economics for a major—because she already knew something of the causes of poverty on Venus—

"The University straightened me out on a number of things, though," she admitted frankly, giving Mitch her direct gaze. "The kids from Outside didn't have much regard for moral values, and I was an experienced girl before I reached the University. Then I got wise, thanks to some of the other girls." She fingered her glass nervously. "I'm not a thoroughly nice girl, Mitch, but at least I've learned something."

Mitch heaved a sigh and gave her a nod of comprehension. He understood, now, that she wasn't the sweet, inno-

cent young lady she tried to be—that she honestly wanted to be. Eileen Graham had been around. Thugs slapping her around and danger threatening her weren't too unexpected or terrifying to her; she'd seen such things happen—she'd grown up on the interplanetary frontier.



The stratowing chased darkness westward and came down at Denver. They disembarked and hired a private airsled, continuing on to Cleveland after breakfast. Eileen took the sleek, transparent little craft up into the pale dawn while Mitch curled up on the seat and dozed off.

The commercial center of Cleveland was a group of mighty towers that rose like shafts of solid cream two miles into the blue afternoon sky. Mitch awoke as the airsled settled on softly humming gravitors to the broad landing stage at the foot of the towers. They registered the little ship and had a quick luncheon in a nearby restaurant. Then they stood together on the broad, dark band of a moving walkway that carried them into the cavernous entrance of the towers.

They stepped off at an information desk and got directions to the offices of *Molecular Transmutors, Inc.*

EILEEN'S shoulders slumped dejectedly as they strolled along a deep-carpeted corridor toward the transparent portals encribed with *Molecular Transmutors* in chrome lettering. She paused and turned to him, and Mitch noticed the shadows of fatigue around her eyes, the travel-worn look of her wrinkled costume.

"I guess this is it," she said huskily,

referring not so much to the portals ahead of them but what waited beyond those portals.

"Do you want any help with this Kimball guy?" Mitch asked with quiet speculation in his tone. "Or do you want to handle him alone?"

"Come in with me," she said tensely; "let me talk to him, though."

"Okay." He slipped his arm around her waist and hugged her, gently. "I'm just the chauffeur. Get in there and pitch, honey."

She tilted her small chin, defiantly, then faced the portals, squared her shoulders, and marched forward. Mitch followed her, grinning,

A smooth, blonde receptionist gave them a cool appraisal as they entered. "May I help you?" her cultured tones inquired, clearly implying that she wouldn't try too hard. She took a second appraisal of Mitch's grayclad figure.

"I'm Miss Graham," Eileen said sharply. "Tell Mr. Kimball I'm here, please."

The blonde froze. "Very well, Miss Graham," she complied icily. Ignoring the viewscreen on her desk, she rose and melted through the inner door labeled *Private*.

"Such a warm reception!" Eileen murmured sarcastically, staring after her.

George Kimball exploded out of the door almost immediately. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man in pearl gray blouse and dark blue breeches, neat and pretty, with distinguished gray temples and black, wavy hair. He pumped Eileen's hand with enthusiasm, his handsome, tanned face wreathed with smiles.

"Well, well, well—Eileen Graham. My, how you've grown. Come in, come right in—my office is this way—" He pulled her toward the door, then started as he noticed Mitch. "Oh," he said. "Is this gentleman with you?"

"Pilot-Astrogator James Mitchell, Mr. George Kimball," Eileen murmured coolly. "Now suppose we get

down to business, Mr. Kimball? Lead the way to that office of yours."

Kimball frowned. "Look here," he protested. "I hope you aren't angry—"

"Your office, Mr. Kimball." Eileen's voice was firm.

Kimball scowled, started to protest again, then shrugged and led the way. They strode down a glass-walled corridor past offices labeled with Vice-Presidents' monograms and entered a sumptuous suite behind a thick portal labeled *President*. Eileen stared at it as she passed, exchanged glances with Mitch, and then gave her attention to another svelte blonde girl busily rattling a recorder keyboard across the room.

"I must compliment you on your taste, Mr. Kimball," she remarked as they entered the luxurious inner sanctum beyond another door.

Kimball ignored her statement, pretending he didn't hear it as he crossed the deep carpet and eased himself in behind a large, curving desk. He gestured them to chairs before him with a languid wave of his hand. "Sit down, Miss Graham, Mr.—ah—Mitchell." He leaned back, resting his elbows on the arms of his chair and forming a pyramid with the tips of his fingers. "Now, let me say first of all that I hope you had a pleasant journey—"

EILEEN stalked forward and leaned her knuckles on the desk. "Perhaps there are a few things you haven't heard about, Mr. Kimball," she snapped angrily. "One: I've been pushed around on four separate occasions by gangs of criminals since I started here, which hardly made it a 'pleasant' journey! Two: my father was president of this corporation, and I doubt if he condoned the effrontery you have in occupying his office. Three: I'm the president of this corporation *now* and you can crawl right out from behind that desk!"

Kimball made a careful examination of his manicured fingernails, then looked up, coldly. "Are you quite through, Miss Graham?"

Eileen's mouth fell open; she stepped back from the desk, stunned.

"I had hoped we could go over this without any unpleasantness," Kimball went on, calmly. "If you will sit down, Miss Graham, I shall endeavor to explain the situation as clearly as I can."

Eileen did a slow turn and stared at Mitch, her features blank, expressionless.

Mitch moved before she could take another step from the desk. He advanced to the side of the desk, standing over Kimball. "Miss Graham requested that you vacate that chair," he said quietly; "I think you ought to do it."

Kimball's features convulsed, darkening with rage. Mitch waited tensely, watching him, then relaxed as he made a fluttery motion with his hands. Kimball was licked and he knew it; he rose from the chair and walked around the desk. "It's all yours, Miss Graham," he said in smooth, mocking tones, then bowed and gestured for her to take his place.

Eileen moved past him, stiffly, and inched her way into the chair. Kimball retreated to one of the chairs facing the desk and sat down. Mitch re-



mained standing at Eileen's side.

Eileen took a deep breath, moistened her lips, and began. "Now, Mr. Kimball, suppose we hear whatever explanation you wanted to offer?"

Kimball nodded, smiling as if nothing had happened. "I presume you're referring to the present condition of the corporation, Miss Graham. The production reports are quite clear: we have been cutting corners in the manufacture of the transmutors and turning out an inferior product—"

"For what reason?" Eileen cut in, sharply.

"For the simple reason that your father didn't like the people whom we were formerly subcontracting for conductive alloys," Kimball replied, not the least perturbed. "*Korbelasco Limited* of Bucharest was our former source of conductive alloys, but it was your father's contention that we were paying entirely too much on that subcontract. On his orders, we broke with Korbelasco and turned to other sources. We've been plagued with inferior alloys ever since; they get past the government inspectors, but the results are quite apparent—we're losing customers right and left! A transmutor should have a life of ten years; our present product breaks down after only a few years. Our customers have lost faith in us—they refuse to buy new transmutors so long as they can patch up and make-shift with their old ones—and when they won't have any more transmutors and must go back to tanked air, we'll lose our franchise. Sales are already falling off; stockholders are abandoning us—"

"I gather, then, that the entire fault lies with my father?" Eileen glared at him with open hatred.

Kimball permitted himself to look discomforted for a moment. "I'm terribly sorry, Miss Graham," he murmured apologetically. "Your father wasn't a well man—"

"He was sick," she snapped back, "but not too sick to see that someone was milking the corporation through a rigged deal with this Korbelasco outfit in Bucharest! Who was getting the kickback on that subcontract, Mr. Kimball?"

"Well, now, look here!" Kimball straightened up, haughtily. "Such a case is hardly supported by the evidence, Miss Graham—the simple fact being that as soon as we quit Korbelasco, our alloys became inferior. Korbelasco happens to be one of the leading metallurgical firms on Earth—"

"All I know is something my father mentioned in one of his letters," Eileen retorted. "He said '*something stinks in*

Bucharest and you've just succeeded in reminding me of it. Thank you. Now, who was getting the kickback?"

KIMBALL'S expression became sul-
len. "It would be rather difficult to prove such an assertion, Miss Graham. As it is, Korbelsco has refused to renew our subcontract due to the bad feeling your father created. Unless our production improves, I'm afraid the corporation is finished."

"Well!" Eileen sank back in her chair, peering at him narrowly. "That's an interesting statement, Mr. Kimball. Since you've been serving as head of the Board of Trustees and acting-president of the corporation, I presume you've made some attempts to improve production?"

"I've tried every way in the world," Kimball replied. "I'm still trying—and I may as well tell you now that the Board of Trustees is solidly behind me." There was a smug amusement in his gaze.

Eileen fingered her chin, thoughtfully. "I see," she murmured, half to herself. "Of course, I still hold the controlling interest in this corporation, Mr. Kimball."

"I'm well aware of that," Kimball acknowledged. "I'm also aware of the fact that our Board of Trustees hardly welcomes the idea of a young, inexperienced woman taking over the reins. That, Miss Graham, was precisely the reason I tried to dissuade you from coming here; it would be better for both you and the corporation if you had remained on Venus."

She stared at him in amazement. "You're quite sure of yourself, aren't you!"

"I'm sure of one thing," Kimball remarked calmly. "If our Board of Trustees walks out, the government will cancel our franchise tomorrow."

Eileen shook her head, slowly. "And I was almost killed by that incendiary bomb—"

Kimball's eyes blazed with swift rage. "Be careful, young lady," he

said gently; "there are defamation laws on this world."

"I thought you knew nothing about it!"

"Oh, I found out about it, naturally—and I'm seriously sorry about your misfortune." Kimball grinned crookedly, flicking his gaze toward Mitch. "I'm relieved to see that Mr.—ah—What's-his-name here is now your—travelling companion? No offense, of course."

"Of course," Mitch answered him, "as you say, there are defamation laws—"

"Mitch, be quiet," Eileen spoke quickly. "I think that will be all for now; you may leave, Mr. Kimball."

"Very well. Don't hesitate to call on me if you want anything." Kimball rose, smiling, and started for the door.

"Just one more thing," she halted him. "Tell your Board of Trustees you're still with the corporation—for the present time, at least."

"Should I say 'thank you'?" Kimball grinned broadly. "Yes? Thank you, Miss Graham." Then he turned and left.

Eileen watched the door close behind him with a scowl of disgust. "I feel as if I'd just woke up in bed with a snake!" she said bitterly. Then she glanced up at Mitch and smiled. "Thanks for holding me up, Mitch."

Mitch pursed his lips, critically. "He almost had you there, for a moment. Well, what now?"

"I'll see if that blonde is still outside." She turned to the viewscreen on the desk, pressed the stud, and waited. There was no answer. She dialed a number at random, got a pert brunette. "Please bring me the films on Korbelsco," she said; "this is Miss Graham."

THE SLEEK, little airsled rose silently into the moonlit night. Puffs of silvery cloud drifted past, bright against the black earth below. Stars twinkled sleepily overhead and

lights sparkled warmly from small, widely-scattered homes beneath. Eileen stifled a yawn, snuggled in the curve of Mitch's arm. Mitch flicked on the robot-pilot and let the airsled fly itself. It would land itself when they reached the destination typed out on its control-keyboard. Mitch settled deeper in the cushions; Eileen stirred and snuggled closer, and they glided onward through the night.

He couldn't go to sleep; he tried, but he couldn't.

Eileen slept like a baby.

He was quietly smoking the last of his cigarettes when the airsled dipped and slid effortlessly toward the black earth. The moon was near the horizon, and as they descended out of its milky glow Mitch blinked and squinted downward. The vague shapes of trees and shadowy hills became discernible. He spotted the light outline of a house ahead, swirling contours and terraced roof, then glanced below again—and jerked forward, sprawling Eileen onto the floor of the cabin as he grabbed the control wheel.

He hauled it back, pulling the airsled up in a tight, climbing turn.

The black shape that rose from beneath them glinted dully as it pointed its nose to the sky, then there was a brilliant, searing glare. The spaceship screamed up past them, into the black sky, bathing the airsled in the glare of its flaming tail. Eileen crouched on the floor and screamed as a loud thunderclap split the night.

Air currents tore at the sled, tumbling it roughly. Mitch fought the controls until it had quieted down, then swung back toward the vague, light splotch of the house. He eased the sled down to the landing ramp beside the house.

Eileen clutched at his legs, sobbing hysterically; he reached down and pulled her into his lap.

She stifled her sobs and struggled weakly against him. He eased her over into the seat, pulled out his handkerchief, and wiped her tear-streaked face. "What—what happened?" she stammered.

"Somebody took off in a black spaceship," he said; "they almost hit us."

She tensed, staring up at him. "A black spaceship!"

"Yeah." He folded his handkerchief and returned it to his pocket.

"And Colonial Control doesn't paint their spaceships black."

She sat up, looking around wildly. "We're—we're at Posovski's?"

"We're at Posovski's," he confirmed grimly. "I think you'd better let me go in, first, and look around."

"And leave me out here?" She clutched his arm, tightly. "I'm staying with you!"

"All right." He slid open the panel on his side and swung his feet out. "Come on."

They walked slowly across the ramp toward the dark, silent house.

MITCH SHIVERED as the cool night breeze trickled into his spaceman's gray, chilling the sweat on his body. He was tired, his nerves jumpy. He'd spent the evening sitting in the office, doing nothing, while Eileen thumbed through stacks of files. The search had turned up one peculiar fact: *Molecular Transmutors* had hired a new production manager. Posovski, who had been production manager under her father, was listed as having been retired on pension. They had gone out to dinner, then, and come to see Posovski.

They saw him sprawled in the faint, blue glow of a floorlamp in his living room, the front of his face blown away.

When they returned to the airsled, Eileen sat perfectly still on the wide seat and gazed ahead at nothingness.

"He knew!" she whispered faintly. "He knew what they were doing—so they had to kill him!"



Mitch reached for his cigarettes, pulled out the empty pack, crumpled it and threw it away. "Why should they kill him just to keep *you* from finding out anything from him?"

"Yes—they tried to kill us too, didn't they!"

"No, that wasn't intentional. They were rising on manual and when we came swooping over them, their pilot got scared and poured on the juice. But that ship had no atmospheric fins or flight controls—it came from outer space and it went back to outer space. The only way to do that would be to maintain a complete radio silence and just hope that no other spaceship spots you on its radarscope."

"You mean they came down from space to kill Posovski? But—"

"That means they didn't expect us," Mitch explained. "If we had taken a little less time with dinner tonight, we'd have got here in time to talk to Posovski—and probably meet the same fate he did. The killers had no way of knowing we were coming here; Kimball couldn't tell them—not without breaking radio silence."

"I see." She produced a pack of cigarettes from her purse and passed one to him. "Then Posovski was killed for some other reason—not just to keep us from talking to him."

"Maybe we're next," Mitch surmised drily. "Maybe Posovski was dangerous because he knew too much and might have talked if he learned you had been killed. Some criminals can't stomach murder—"

"But he wasn't a criminal."

"You sure?"

"Positive. But he knew something, and they had to keep him from talking. Suppose they have to kill me and—and you—and suppose Posovski knew something that wasn't bad in itself, but would tell him exactly who had killed us, and why?"

"Such as what, for instance?"

"Such as who was getting the kick-back on that Korbalesco subcontract, and who would want us killed. They knew he'd go straight to the Police."

"They had to shut him up, all right—but I don't think it was because they planned to kill us; not entirely, anyway. That black spaceship is an outlaw and must have a hidden base of its own somewhere—it can't land at any of the spaceports unless its a franchised ship—"

"Could it be?"

"Yes—I've thought of that, but I doubt it. The guy who was piloting it hadn't got dry behind the ears yet; he was never turned out by the Space Academy! But the point is, this is a lot bigger than murder. It's interplanetary conspiracy, and somehow it's tied up with the present efforts to destroy your corporation and break its commercial franchise. Somebody doesn't want you to sell air renewers on the other worlds!"

"But this is murder!" Eileen gestured toward the house, protestingly. "Aren't we going to call the Earth Police?"

"Not on the house videophone," Mitch retorted grimly. "Somebody blew the screen to bits, or didn't you notice?"

"All I noticed was—him, lying there."

"This isn't a case for the Earth Police anyway. Interplanetary conspiracy's Colonial jurisdiction, and we ought to get the Space Fleet after that black ship—" Mitch broke off, frowning worriedly. "There's just one difficulty," he added in a dull voice. "We have no proof that any black spaceship was ever here; there isn't a shred of evidence to prove that we didn't kill Posovski ourselves!"

"But we aren't armed—"

"Weapons can be gotten rid of."

SHE TURNED to him, her eyes wide and dark. "What shall we do, Mitch?"

"You didn't tell anyone we were coming out here?"

"No."

"Then we leave." He switched on the power and lifted the little airsled into the darkness. Typing out

C-l-e-v-e-l-a-n-d on the control-key-board, he left the ship to fly itself.

"Now," he said, "tell me this: who would want to break your corporation?"

"I—I don't know—"

"Who's your competitor?"

She hesitated pensively, then shrugged. "Seven other companies share the Jovian and Saturnian Moons on their franchises, but none of them would be big enough to handle our Mercury-Venus-Mars franchise. Of course, we were a government-sponsored corporation to start with; if the government breaks our franchise, they'll sponsor one of the other companies until it can supply air renewers to our planets."

"So you haven't any direct competitors—the government would decide who got your franchise?"

"That's right; if another company tried to run us out of business, they'd have no way of knowing whether the government would grant them the franchise after we lost it. There'd be no point in trying it."

"Then what about shennanigans in the government? Could some bureaucrat be selling out to another company?"

"I doubt it. The U.N.O. puts Colonial Control through some rather tough inspections—and if the bureaucrat were caught, there'd be some tough penalties."

"Then who would want to break up your corporation?"

"I don't know!"

"You checked *Molecular Transmutors'* stock—"

"Yes. It's depreciating fast and flooding the market."

"And nobody's buying it up, trying to get a controlling interest at a cheap price?"

"My father had the controlling stock and I'm not selling; I can outvote the rest of the stock no matter who owns it."

"Nobody's tried to get you to sell?"

"That would be rather obvious,

wouldn't it? I'd know who ordered Posovski killed, then."

"Yeah," Mitch slumped back in the seat, scowling darkly. "That leaves us just one sure thing—the black spaceship! Coming in a spaceship, to commit a murder on Earth, means the murderers' headquarters are on some other planet; that may mean the real trouble isn't here, either!"

"You mean someone on another planet wants to break the corporation? But that doesn't make sense! They're the ones who're suffering!"

"Well, maybe it doesn't and maybe it does, but we aren't likely to find out much more here on Earth. Mr. George Kimball has everything sewed up tight—"

"Including the Board of Trustees!"

"And if there were anything, it's been carefully covered up so that Board of Trustees won't find it. We haven't much of a chance. By the way, did you check the branch office on Venus before you left?"

"No! I—I had no idea what to look for! This Korbelsasco thing—"

"They don't usually pass out such information to branch offices," he agreed comprehensively. "We'll check that Korbelsasco deal."

MITCH CHECKED it via long-distance videophone from the Cleveland center. He emerged from a public 'phone booth and joined Eileen at a lunch counter, showing her a hastily scribbled list of notations:

- 1) Korbelsasco of Budapest is one of Earth's leading metallurgical firms (as Kimball claimed).
- 2) Three other firms could have duplicated Korbelsasco's work on *Molecular Transmutor* parts (Kimball said none could).
- 3) Korbelsasco had refused to renew *Molecular Transmutor's* subcontract; in fact, they had cancelled it (not Eileen's father) because M-T production had started mass-rejection of Korbelsasco parts which were perfectly good.

4) Posovski had not been M-T production manager at the time the subcontract was cancelled.

5) M-T was now paying more for the same parts than they had paid Korbelsasco.

Eileen tapped the last notation with an indignant fingernail. "There it is," she said. "Our files show we paid Korbelsasco three times as much as they say we paid them. Now, who pocketed the difference? Find that out and we'll find the murderer!"

Mitch ordered coffee and sipped it reflectively. "I doubt it," he argued mildly. "That was a swindle that took place three years ago—"

"When George Kimball became head of the Board of Trustees!"

"—And it doesn't fit in with hiring gangs of thugs to prevent you from reaching Earth or running in a gang of killers in a black spaceship. If it was a swindle, it can't be proved; there's no reason to murder anybody over it."

"But what else is there?"

"There's the fact that Kimball is very obviously running the corporation to ruin, and covering his tracks so well nobody suspects it. There's the fact that apparently he has nothing to gain by it, so he must be doing it for someone else—"

"But his whole career's tied up in *Molecular Transmutors*!"

"Which means someone else must have a hold over him, blackmailing him into doing their dirty work for them. Maybe they know about this Korbelsasco swindle—maybe they're threatening him with that. No, what we should do is find this 'someone else'."

"Someone on another planet?"

"Who wants *Molecular Transmutors* broken. They must have something to gain by it—which means they must be either on Mercury, Venus, or Mars, since that's where you sell air renewers. They must have something to gain by making you stop selling air renewers."

"But which planet is it?"

"Venus is our best bet; that's where the trouble started."

"What about Posovski?"

"Somebody will find him."

"Shouldn't we tell the Police something?"

Mitch shook his head. "We'd be sticking our necks in a noose. Anyone who's managed to hijack a spaceship and get away with it would jump at the chance to frame us for Posovski's murder."

She pursed her lips indecisively. "What would you do about Kimball?"

"Nothing, until I had some definite proof that could be laid before the Board of Trustees."

"Then we may as well go to Venus."



THE TRINKET had an Earth-Venus trajectory for nineteen chronological days. Mitch split the days in half and established a twelve-hour routine of three four-hour watches: first watch, they both stood together; second watch, he stood while Eileen slept; third watch, she stood while he slept. One meal only, during first watch.

He taught her to watch the gauges and scope until she had it down pat; if anything went wrong, of course, she would sound the alarm to wake him up. During first watch, he took her on a few of his inspection tours of the little space-cruiser until she knew what it involved; then he left her in the cockpit and made the inspections alone. It was never wise to leave the instruments unwatched; they gave the first tell-tale flicker of warning when any mechanism was beginning to break down—that was the time to catch it, not after the breakdown had occurred. A finicky transformer could be cut off and repaired; a burned-out transformer was a complete loss. And their lives depended on the ship's mechanisms.

So, for nineteen chronological days—thirty-eight twelve-hour periods—they were alone, marooned inside a

tiny steel splinter floating in the middle of the black heavens.

Mitch was concerned for her mental and emotional stability, so he tried to be friendly and respectful toward Eileen. He probably should have given more thought to his own emotions.

He felt no prejudice toward her for having involved him in a situation of intrigue, murder and violence. The danger only served to intensify his curiosity: someone was trying to stop Eileen from selling air-renewers to the other planets. Why? People needed air-renewers for their homes, for the helmets they must wear in the alien, unbreathable atmosphere of the other planets, for the domed cities. They had to have air they could breathe! Without air-renewers they'd have to go back to carrying tanked air, supplied to them by their planetary governments.

Because he was a spaceman, trained and dedicated to help the settlers of the other worlds, Mitch felt that anything which threatened their survival was an equal threat to himself. This wasn't just a girl's battle to save her father's business; it was bigger than that. It was a shadow of death by suffocation that lay across three worlds!

His feeling for Eileen Graham had nothing to do with that.

She affected the loose, filmy, cover-all garments of her home-world, Venus, for ship's wear. These thin, pajama-like costumes left little of her smooth, ivory-white body to speculation, though they were commendable for Venus where the dense, misty atmosphere would weigh any garb heavily—too heavily for comfort, unless it was thin—with moisture. With the gradual lethargy of spaceflight routine dulling her senses, and the way she slouched about the ship with her hair tumbling loosely to her shoulders, her face blank and sulky, and her clothing fastened only haphazardly at the waist, the effect was sometimes rather breath-taking from Mitch's point of view.

Her casual acceptance of him was

almost childlike; it was perfectly obvious that she trusted him completely. That, itself, was foolish. Mitch couldn't have trusted himself that completely. It took a good deal of effort to remain merely cordial and respectful toward her, at times.

IT REACHED a climax during a first watch when they were sprawled together in the seat before the instrument panel. The cockpit was lighted only by the soft glow of starlight coming through the transparent blister. Eileen rested lazily against him on the cushions and their conversation had died of its own boredom; then, in a fit of mischievousness, she began tickling him.

Mitch wasn't especially ticklish, so the feeling was somewhat different. He pulled her close and kissed her, taking his time about it, caressing her quite thoroughly and enjoyably. She lay still and submissive against him for a few minutes of it, then struggled and pushed away. She moved over to the corner of the seat and pushed her hair back from her face with a nervous, trembling gesture.

"Don't do that again, Mitch," she said. "I didn't tell you about me because I thought it would give you ideas."

Mitch scowled at the instrument dials. "Nothing you said gave me that idea."

She was silent for a moment; then she spoke softly, in a voice quavering on the verge of tears. "Don't say it was love, Mitch; you aren't the type."

Quickly, she rose and left the cockpit, her bare feet pattering down the ladderway.

Thereafter, she was cool and distant; she did up her hair and was more fastidious about fastening her garments. The trip to Venus settled down to just another spaceflight.

Mitch contacted Venus Control and received clearance for their approach

trajectory. The planet was a huge, bloated globe of silvery mist on their viewscreen as the little *Trinket* chuckled and clacked her automatics and went curving down toward the planet. They plunged into the swirling mists and went boring down through grayness—and the grayness deepened to inky blackness with swirling masses of gray, then to a wet, twinkling blackness with an eerie glow seeping through it to reveal thin curtains of mist and blurred sheets of rain curling and rippling over a rugged, wet landscape. The *Trinket* slipped through a wide gorge between two gigantic mountain-peaks and whined down on her sleek fins toward a broad spaceport field beside the looming, wet dome of Venus City. She glided to a halt beside a gleaming spaceliner, poised on her gravitons above the deep mud, then settled down with a gurgling splash.

Eileen broke out helmets from the ship's stores and they donned them before clamboring out the airlock. Spaceport crewmen had rolled a metal-mesh walkway across the mud to their cruiser and a Customs official stood waiting to register them. The wet atmosphere closed over them as they stepped down to meet him, plastering their clothes to their bodies. The official noted the holstered blasters on their hips with a grim smile.

●

AN HOUR later, they were registered and passed through Decontamination. They left the Port Hospital and took a taxi across town to the Venus City offices of *Molecular Transmutors*.

Michael Semanichek, Venus City manager for M-T, was a squat, barrel-chested man with red hair and features chipped out of white marble with a crude chisel. He hit them with the piercing, blue gaze of a sharp promotor and ushered them to chairs before his scarred, battered desk. Then he sat down and hit them with his

forceful, gravelly voice. "I must ask you to leave Venus immediately. If you don't, your lives won't be worth a tinker's damn!"

Eileen sat up and rested her hand on the blaster at her hip. "I think we're prepared for that, Mr. Semanichek."

That won a grin. "Call me Mike," the manager growled gently. "I kinda figured it'd be that way with you, Miss Graham, if you was anything like your Old Man. Now, you want to know the deal here?"

"Exactly!" she asserted firmly.

Mike nodded. "Hang onto your britches, then. In the first place, we're losing customers right and left because our air-renewers don't work any more. Now, this would seem like the home office was sending us cheap transmutors from Earth; fact is, when I reported the breakdowns of our air-renewers to Earth, they sent a letter apologizing for the inferior product and said they had trouble in production—"

"From George Kimball?"

"Yeah, from Kimball. I went down to shipping to get an air-renewer and give it my own inspection, only they didn't happen to have any stock right then. So when the next shipment came in, I went right over to the spaceport and got me one before Port Inspection even had a chance at it," Mike paused his eyes narrowing. "Ever since then, I been wishing I had eyes in back of my head!"

"Why?" Eileen prompted.

"Because I happen to be a metallurgist by training," Mike explained quietly. "There wasn't a thing wrong with that air-renewer when I examined it. So I put in a few scratches for identification, then checked it again after Port Inspection had passed it—"

"Port Inspection sees that incoming cargo hasn't been damaged in shipment and still meets its franchise specifications, doesn't it?" Mitch put in.

Mike nodded. "That's Port Inspection. Imported products must meet the franchise specs set down by the gov-

ernment and Colonial Control. So Port Inspection passed this cargo of air-renewers as okay, but I checked that air-renewer again just for curiosity's sake; the renewer had been sabotaged!"

"You mean—by Port Inspection?" Eileen stammered incredulously.

"By somebody in Port Inspection," Mike affirmed. "They'd given it a sonic burst. The crystalline structure of some of the conductive alloy parts had been broken down and the mechanism would've failed in just a few years' service. The whole shipment was like that."

"Didn't you report this to Colonial Control?"

"Sure! Colonial Control referred it to the Venus Police and I was dragged into court, charged with tampering with the cargo before it was cleared by Port Inspection! The charge was dropped for lack of evidence." Mike snorted derisively. "They just didn't find out who did it in Port Inspection, that's all!"

"They probably thought you were going to file suit against the government." Mitch surmised. "That charge was merely legal action to destroy any grounds you could claim for a suit—"

"I know that," Mike cut him short. "But air-renewers are still being tampered with; and Port Inspection is under the Venus government, not Colonial Control. The funny part is that the Venus government has even refused Police protection for our dealers and agents!"

"Do they need protection?" Eileen asked.

Mike grimaced. "Two of our agents were killed, and three more have disappeared on sales trips in the past six months. Four dealers' establishments have been broken into and ransacked. The air-renewers we've been selling have begun to break down—twenty-seven people have been caught Outside and died of suffocation when their renewers cut out. There's bad feeling against us all over the planet; Venus Police says that explains the attacks

on our men. And there's a bill pending in the legislature to cancel our commercial franchise and put everybody back on tanked air."

"But why would Port Inspection sabotage our product?"

"Uh huh! Or why would *somebody* in Port Inspection do it? Wouldn't be because certain political bosses in certain domed cities were behind this bill to switch back to tanked air, would it?"

Eileen shook her head, perplexedly. "Just what are you trying to tell me, Mike?"

"I'm merely saying that if Venus goes back to tanked air, the people will have to depend on the government for that air—and these city-bosses will have the job of handing it out!"

"You mean the people will have to depend on these political bosses for their air?"

"Uh huh. And if a guy don't get air, he dies."

THEY WALKED out on the parking ramp, a tall, young man in spaceman's gray and a slender, lovely girl in silken red, with helmets swung back from their shoulder harness and guns buckled about their hips.

"What do we do now, Mitch?" she asked him, as if it were natural and proper to follow his decisions.

Mitch shook his head, frowning bitterly. "From political corruption to dictatorship in one easy step," he muttered. "And *Molecular Transmutors* are the ones who get stepped on."

"We can't prove it," she reminded him. "You heard what Mike said—no one even knows who's the head of those city-bosses!"

"Yeah. I think we ought to check Mike's story a little, though."

"Where? Port Authority?"

"That's good as any."

Eileen stepped up to the short call-column nearby and depressed the button for a taxi. One of the sleek, open, three-wheeled vehicles rolled up almost

immediately. They climbed over the low side and settled back in the soft cushions. Mitch typed Port Authority on the tiny control-keyboard and the taxi swung off the ramp into the broad ribbon of the trafficway. They went gliding swiftly along curving spans, speeding among towering slabs of giant buildings with the wind rippling at their hair. Other taxis sped along ahead and behind them, and flashed past on other trafficways curving above and below theirs. The buildings rose sheer and smooth to the gleaming dome overhead, and terraced rooftops swept past below, bright with gardens and shrubbery and tinkling fountains. Colored spotlights played about in a rainbow symphony, swinging over buildings and trafficways and gardens.

They descended a wide spiral and swung in to the parking ramp before the curved buildings of Port Authority. The slick surface of the dome curved down from above, showing the eternal, swirling darkness of Venus' cloud-blanket, through a wavering deluge of rain. Purple lightning streaked the black vaults of the clouds. Their taxi nosed up the parking ramp and stopped.

Dismounting, they strode in through the cavernous concourse that led to the spaceport. The walls were lined with the display windows of shops, restaurants, bars, ticket agencies, theaters and travel bureaus. The people were for the most part tall and slender, with creamy white skin, wearing silken garments similar to Eileen's. Many of them, just in from the spaceport field, wore their shoulder harness with helmets thrown back. And many of them wore holstered guns: Venus was still a frontier world, in many respects.

They stopped in a small restaurant-bar and Eileen ordered lunch for both while Mitch occupied himself in a public videophone booth. Spaceport Information noted his spaceman's gray and readily provided the facts he asked for: Mike Semanichek had been

charged with tampering with cargo not cleared by Port Inspection, and the charge dismissed in court; a political group from the smaller domed cities had introduced a bill in the Venus legislature to go back to tanked air; there was bad feeling among Venusian settlers for *Molecular Transmutors*, and there had been some killings. Mitch rejoined Eileen at their table and told her Mike's information was correct.

"But I think it's bigger than a plot to establish dictatorship on Venus," he said grimly. "Colonial Control would clamp down on such a dictatorship as soon as it got started, so the plot by itself doesn't make sense. But your corporation has been having trouble on Mars and Mercury as well—"

"I've been wondering about that!" Eileen exclaimed. "Do you think the same thing could be happening on those planets?"

"That black spaceship makes me think it's a three-planet deal! There may be one gang behind the political bosses on all three worlds!"

"But how can we find out?"

"We might start with the political bosses here."

"Once we leave Venus City, anything could happen—not that I'm any more afraid than you are." She gazed at him levelly.

"I'm plenty afraid!" he retorted, grinning. "But there's one other thing that'll make them hesitate to harm us. That's the gray I'm wearing; if they kill a spaceman, Colonial Police will be swarming all over this planet!"

THE VENUS Control officer was adamant. "I cannot accept your flight plan to cruise around this planet," he told Mitch emphatically. "Venus Police says it would be dangerous for you to land anywhere else, in view of the present situation."

"Then we'll travel without a flight plan!" Mitch retorted angrily.

The officer shrugged. "In that case,

you're risking your own neck; Venus Control cannot be held responsible."

Mitch flicked off the communications screen and whirled back to the controls with a curse. "Get out the Venus topographical charts," he snapped. "We'll have to fly on manual."

Eileen spread the charts before her and Mitch lifted the cruiser into the swirling blackness. A sheet of rain swept past, drumming on the cockpit blister, and was gone. "Twenty-four degrees northeast," she called to him. "Altitude four thousand, speed three hundred miles an hour."

Mitch swung the *Trinket* on course.

There were tall, steep mountains of wet rock hidden in the black cloak of the mists; hundreds of volcanoes belched hot gasses upward from their flaming mouths; vast slopes covered with gigantic trees rolled upward from below. Giant carnivores arched their massive necks and gnashed jagged teeth as the *Trinket* screamed past unseen, high in the dark mists.

Mitch rode the 'scope and gauges; Eileen timed their flight and read off their course from the charts. The little cruiser bucked and skittered away as a wet, gleaming black cliff loomed out of the mists...

Jungalia was a small dome snuggled against a muddy slope between a steep wall of rock and the thick tangle of the swamp-jungles. Mitch set the cruiser down on the metal ramp beside the dome, tucking her neatly between a squat jet-cargo plane and a row of mud-splattered jungle tanks. They closed their helmets and swung down from the airlock, striding purposefully toward the city's dark, gleaming dome.

"Looks like a reception committee," Mitch observed, his voice creating a faint echo inside his helmet.

A crowd of helmeted figures stood outside the city's big locks. The crowd was growing; Mitch noticed, as they strode toward it. He saw atomic ri-

fles hanging from the crooks of arms, holstered blasters and long, curved jungle knives.

"Not a woman in the bunch!" Eileen commented cryptically. "I don't think they like us here!"

"Nobody's aiming anything at us—yet," Mitch replied. He booked his thumb over the hard butt of his blaster.

THEY WERE hardly more than twenty feet from the silent, staring men when a shout went up from the rear, and a platoon of green-uniformed Venus Police pushed their way through the crowd. They formed ranks in front of the crowd, facing Mitch and Eileen, and grounded their rifles. A husky, tough-looking Police Lieutenant stepped forward, addressing the two solitary figures as if they were inanimate statues.

"It is the duty of the Venus Police to inform Miss Eileen Graham that she is hereby under arrest for suspicion of murder. Kindly surrender your weapon, Miss Graham, and come along—this cancels the contract you have with this spaceman, of course; he may leave."

"Murder!" Eileen gasped. "Whose murder?"

"The murder of one Michael Semanicheck, of Venus City," the Lieutenant answered readily. "You are known to be the last to see him alive. Come along, now—"

"Hold it!" Mitch snapped. "If she was the last to see him alive—and if he is dead—then I was there, too; how come you're not arresting me?"

"All I'm doing is following orders, spaceman," the Lieutenant retorted curtly. "If you're in any trouble, the Colonial Police will handle it. I'm placing Miss Graham under arrest, which ends any business you may have with her, so get back to your ship—"

"You couldn't be overlooking me because you don't want the Colonial Police nosing around here, could you?"

"My orders concern only Miss Graham—"

"All right, so your *bosses* don't want any Colonial Police around!"

The Lieutenant sneered. "My advice to you, spaceman, is to keep your nose clean." He whirled to his platoon. "Valotti, Ching—take charge of the prisoner, Miss Graham—"

"Careful, boy!"

Something in the soft, quiet way Mitch said it made the Lieutenant look back, startled. He grew even more startled when he saw Mitch's blaster aimed at him. "I'm calling your bluff, boy," Mitch told him gently. "I don't think you want to have any trouble with a spaceman, do you? A guy wears gray, folks don't like cops or anybody else pushing him around—"

"You're aiding a criminal—" the Lieutenant raged.

"Suppose you just take the matter up with the Colonial Police?" Mitch cut him short. "If I'm in any trouble, *they'll* handle it."

The Lieutenant gave him a long, hard stare. "This is none of your business, spaceman! I'm taking Miss Graham prisoner and—"

"And I'm blowing you right in half if you try any such thing!" Mitch spoke earnestly. "You don't look as if you want to go back into the dome in pieces, Lieutenant. In fact, you don't look as if you've been a Lieutenant long enough to appreciate it yet."

That hit home. The Lieutenant stiffened, his features blushing under his helmet; there were a few scared grins in the platoon behind him. Then he whirled, snapped an order to his men, and marched them back through the crowd, on into the city's big airlocks.

"Whew!" Eileen clutched at Mitch's arm as he holstered his blaster. "Mitch, do you actually think they killed Mike?"

"Maybe," he replied grimly. "It's certain that we've come down in enemy territory, though. I can pick three men out of this crowd in front of us now who've had more experience than those so-called Venus Police.

Looks like a force loaded down with political small-fry."

"Politics, hmm?" Eileen's eyes narrowed. "If there's anyone here in Jungalia who'd know about politics, it's Sawtooth McKane. He runs the local newspaper, Mitch—I went to school with his four grandsons—"

"Then let's go see him."

"If this crowd will let us through—"

"Just stick behind me and don't start shooting 'til I do."

"That's what I *was* doing!" She grinned nervously.

THEY STRODE forward, and the crowd parted as if a wedge were being shoved through it. Nobody said anything; they just watched. *They haven't decided yet!* Mitch thought. And then he knew Mike's travelling agents hadn't been killed by angry settlers—

Passing through the airlocks was like walking into another world. The mud, the mists, the rust-streaked ships and the armed, grizzled crowd were left behind. Before them stood a city of luxurious splendor. Broad, terraced gardens stretched away in flat planes of brilliant Venusian green, dotted with palatial mansions and crisscrossed with trafficways. The buildings were set airily apart in the center of the city, great slabs of pastel colors, glowing with inner light, that rose to support the dark, gleaming dome above.

"Jungalia is a city of plantation owners," Eileen remarked, noticing Mitch's stunned expression. "Almost every family is filthy rich. Most of the planet's wealth is tied up in plantations, you know."

But Mitch was looking at something else. There were people swarming about on the broad ramp, dressed in the gaudy, silken trappings of the elite of Venus. People were turning to stare at Eileen and whisper to each other, and their eyes were filled with cold hatred. *These people had decided!*

He led Eileen to a taxi and they went skimming across the city. She

started to point out the single, tall building that was Venus University, when she froze in astonishment. Huge banners were hung from the building—**AIR-RENEWERS ARE DEATH-BOXES!—DOWN WITH MOLECULAR TRANSMUTORS—EILEEN GRAHAM: THE WITCH WHO KILLED VENUS!—MEN MUST BREATHE!—DOWN WITH THE DEATH-BOXES—**

Sawtooth McKane was a thin, little man with fading hair and a pinched face. His archaic spectacles gave him the look of a half-starved owl. He sat behind a roll-top desk that was probably as old as Man's first footprint in the soil of Venus, and threw one leg over the arm of his swivel-chair.

"They're running a smear-campaign against *Molecular Transmutors* that's the hottest thing on Venus!" he exclaimed nasally. "Rumor has it the virus disease your father picked up twisted his mind, and he gave orders before he died that would cause the death of the people here on Venus if they continued to use his air-renewers."

"Why, that's absurd!" Eileen protested.

"Sure it is!" McKane grinned mirthlessly. "It's damned good propaganda, too! These so-called 'decent folks' inside here lap that stuff up! The folks Outside aren't that easily convinced, I'm proud to say—y'can't turn their heads with any such dirty gossip. Hardly a one of 'em that couldn't top any story you made up out of his own experience."

"But the fact remains that our air-renewers are failing," Eileen summarized, "and some people have been caught away from their homes—too far away to get back safely before they suffocated—"

"That's what'll arouse the folks Outside, if it keeps up," McKane confirmed, nodding. "And once that happens, we're back to tanked air and the city-bosses are God. I'll be out

of business, then, my presses smashed. They've been trying to scare me out with threats; I've lost most of my city subscribers. But as long as anybody Outside reads my paper, I'll print it!"

Jungalia isn't the only city under a political boss' rule," Mitch interjected querulously. "Who do you think is behind all this?"

McKANE spread his hands in a gesture of helplessness. "Who knows? This political machine has been building up for years. I can remember when Venus was hardly settled, and the cities were no more than frontier outposts; if any gang of crooks had tried this then, they'd have been blasted in the wink of an eye! But the cities have gone soft since then, got civilized, and corruption has crept in—you gotta go Outside to find the frontier. Far as I can see, the bunch running this political machine had criminal records when they left Earth!"

"They're immigrants from Earth?" Mitch asked.

"Most of 'em are, higher up," McKane affirmed. "They've got most of the riffraff around here working for 'em. The situation stinks to high heaven, but you can't tell these city-dwellers anything; they won't soil their lily-white hands on anything as degrading as politics."

"That soft, huh?"

"Soft as hell!" McKane nodded emphatically.

"Have you heard anything about Mike Semanichek being murdered in Venus City?"

McKane gave Mitch a grim smile. "Somebody got killed, all right—but it wasn't Semanichek! Venus Police sent out a general alarm just a few minutes ago—'a dead man found in Semanichek's offices' and 'further investigation being made' was the gist of it. If they'd killed Mike, they'd have said so!"

Eileen leaned forward with sudden intentness. "If we give you Mike's story, will you print it?"

"What is the story?" McKane replied shrewdly.

"That the air-renewers have been sabotaged by Post Inspection in Venus City!"

"Proof?"

"It's what Mike told us. Ask him!"

McKane peered at her for a moment, then chuckled drily. "All right, I'll print it that way. Besides, I kinda like you, honey—you belonged to Outside. I haven't forgotten how these snooty city kids looked down on you 'til your daddy got rich."

Eileen rose and held out her hand. "Thanks a lot, Sawtooth."

MITCH followed her out and they walked along the ramp to the trafficway. "I almost wish I'd never come back!" Eileen said abruptly, gazing out over the city.

"I'm beginning to see what you mean," Mitch said, reaching for his blaster.

But the dapper, grinning man who stepped up beside them already had a gun centered on Eileen. "Don't do it, spaceman," he warned, "or I'll blast her!"

Others came from behind shrubbery and pillars, guns in their hands. Mitch submitted sullenly as his weapon was torn from its holster. Eileen gave a yelp of indignation as one man grabbed her while another took her gun.

The dapper gang-leader waved his blaster toward a long, low official car. "Climb in, people," he said breezily; "the Commish wants to see you."

They entered the car and gunmen piled in beside them. The car started up smoothly and whisked them over the terraced roof-gardens.

The Commissioner's office was a high-domed vault with pearl walls and a massive desk at the end of twenty majestic yards of deep carpet. He wore a pearl, silken uniform trimmed in green and clamped a long, black cigar in his fleshy jowls.

Commissioner Walden made a languid gesture to his dapper lieutenant. "Place Miss Graham in custody, Kor-

liss, and get her out of here. I'll have a word alone with Mr. Mitchell."

Korliss saluted and motioned to his men. Eileen was led from the room.

Walden wriggled a fat finger at the chair before his desk. "Sit down, Mitchell, sit down; hope my boys weren't rough with you."

"I just know you do," Mitch sneered. He sprawled into the chair. "What happens if I come across that desk and throttle your fat neck?"

"A friend of mine behind the wall will cut you down before you're within a foot of me," Walden answered mildly. "It's no bluff, either; you don't bluff easily, Mitchell."

Mitch took out his cigarettes and puffed one alight. "So what did you want to see me about?"

"Don't you know? I want to ask what your interest is in this business?"

"Then ask me!" Mitch gazed pensively at the cold, sagging white features across the desk. Walden wasn't the kind of man to have heard about the responsibilities of spacemen to the settlers of other worlds; or if he had, he didn't believe it. *And he wouldn't believe me!* Mitch thought.

"I wouldn't be difficult if I were you," Walden spoke softly; "it won't do you any harm to be frank, now, will it?"

"I'll give you as much as you give me," Mitch retorted. "Who's behind the city-bosses on this planet? And what's he doing on Mars and Mercury?"

For a moment, Commissioner Walden looked as if he'd been kicked between the eyes. He recoiled into the depths of his chair, glaring at Mitch. "How much do you know, exactly?" he demanded harshly.

"I know that if you keep Miss Graham, the Colonial Police aren't going to like it," Mitch told him, bluntly. "This matter is entirely beyond the jurisdiction of the Venus Police, or you; there's a black spaceship being traced—"

"You're an agent of the Colonial Police?"

The direct question was supposed

to catch Mitch off-guard. He merely shrugged and lifted an eyebrow. "All spacemen are under the direct jurisdiction of Colonial Control. You've already done enough to get yourself shipped back to Penal Correction on Earth, Walden—it's time some psycho's had a look at that head of yours!"

Walden's lips had a faintly greenish tinge. "Just what are you driving at?"

Mitch grinned; the bluff was working. "Release Miss Graham in my custody at once. Return our weapons and allow us to leave Jungalia peacefully. You're small fry, Walden—we have no interest in you! If you want to save your fat neck, I'd advise you to get out of this deal fast!"

"And if I don't?"

"Then you'll have to kill me to keep my mouth shut. And if you kill me, someone will get word back to the Colonial Police. We won't get your ring-leader, Walden, but we'll get you—and nothing in Heaven or Hell will save you!"

Walden snorted. "You scare me, spaceman; you scare me to death." He reached over and pressed a button on his desk.

Mitch tensed. The door was opening behind him; heavy footsteps were thudding across the deep carpet. Had the bluff failed?

"Have you anything further to add, Mr. Mitchell?" Walden was watching him with a cold, hostile gaze.

"I've told you the score," Mitch replied evenly.

Walden kept watching him. Mitch kept his face expressionless, Walden's fingers drummed on the desk. The faint, pattering sound echoed through the room....

Then Walden sighed softly. "Bring Miss Graham in," he ordered in a dull, resigned voice. "She and Mr. Mitchell are to be escorted immediately to the landing field."

Mitch's stiff features gave no indication of the elated feeling swelling inside him. He rose and turned, casually, ignoring the half dozen armed men standing behind his chair.

Walden was afraid of Colonial Control! His crowd had no control over the Colonial Pounce—not as they had over the Venus Police!

He strode calmly past the armed men, paying no attention as they fell in behind him, following him to the door.

AS THEY entered the *Trinket* and closed the airlock portal behind them, Eileen threw back her helmet and stumbled into his arms. Mitch held her close, feeling her body tremble against him. He freed a hand and reached up, swinging back his own helmet.

"I was scared!" Eileen gasped timorously.

"It was close," he admitted. His voice was drawn with fatigue. "If Walden had thought a minute, he might have suspected I was bluffing him. The law prevents the Colonial Police from meddling in planetary affairs unless interplanetary conspiracy has definitely been proven—"

"Don't quote Space Regulations at me now!" she protested, pushing away from him. "Let's get out of here before they change their minds!"

They lifted the *Trinket* into the enveloping, black mists and flew back to Venus City. Mitch arranged with Spaceport Maintenance for the cruiser's refueling, then joined Eileen in the ship's salon.

"Well, what have we gained by going to Jungalia?" she asked wearily.

Mitch sprawled into the seat beside her. "We've learned that the headquarters for this criminal bunch isn't on Venus," he replied, unfastening his shoulder harness.

She looked up, puzzled. "Have we?"

"I mentioned the black spaceship to Walden," he explained. "It hit pay-dirt—Walden wasn't surprised at all!"

"Doesn't that mean it's hidden somewhere on Venus?"

Mitch shook his head, grinning. "If

the big boss was on Venus, Walden would've consulted him before turning us loose. Also, a small-fry like Walden probably wouldn't have known about the black spaceship unless he'd been seeing it come down on some hidden landing field when the big boss came visiting. Wherever that ship's based they aren't likely to let minor tools like Walden know about it."

"Then where is the—" Eileen broke off as a dull thumping sound came from outside.

Mitch went to the airlock, blaster in hand, and opened the portals for a tall, gray-haired man in gray uniform. "Colonial Inspector Grimes, of Venus City," he introduced himself as he entered, then swung back his helmet. "I understand you had some trouble in Jungalia, Mr. Mitchell."

"Who told you?" Mitch asked in surprise.

Grimes smiled. "Couple of people—fellow named McKane sent in a call, and a mutual friend of ours named Mike Semanichek had some things to say."

"Mike's with you?" Eileen exclaimed, coming to meet him.

"He's safe under cover," Grimes replied congenially. He unzipped his jacket and handed Mitch his credentials. "I'd like to hear your end of the story, if you don't mind—"



THE *TRINKET* curved away from the misty globe of Venus and hurled herself toward the Sun. Days passed, and the Sun swelled to a bloated sphere of flame; the tiny steel splinter curved past it and plunged onward until the planet Mercury became a small, solid pebble in the black space ahead.

It was a tough trip for the *Trinket*. It kept her running for twenty-nine

days, left her fuel bunkers almost empty, taxed her air-conditioning and refrigeration units to their utmost.

Twenty-nine days were a long time for a man and woman to be shut up together in a steel shell, too. Especially when the temperature rose to 125° and the sweat poured off their bodies as they checked and rechecked and checked again to be absolutely sure the ship was on her course—that she wasn't drifting into the deadly grip of the Sun, to go plunging to a fiery doom—

There were five straight days of that. Mitch stood it for exactly four hours, then stripped. When Eileen came on watch and saw him, she didn't say a word—they were both too exhausted to say much of anything. She merely stripped off her own garments and collapsed beside him, her body glistening wet with sweat. They took turns scampering down the hot ladderway to plunge under the showers in their staterooms; it was the only respite. They couldn't eat; they couldn't sleep. It went on for five days.

Then the *Trinket* was past the Sun, floating serenely out into the starry blackness. Eileen put her clothes back on; Mitch took the hint and redonned his own.

She looked cute, anyway, in her uniform. It molded to her figure, a gray skirt and blouse with the scarlet trim of Colonial Customs. The credentials in her purse proclaimed her to be a Colonial agent, now. Being a space-man, Mitch needed no such trappings; he was automatically in Colonial service. Eileen strutted in her uniform as proudly as a drum-majorette.

But a worked-on ship was a working ship. Mitch was up to his elbows in the greasy mess of molten insulation, sprung bearings, and heat-cracked tubes. And a clean ship was a healthy ship—Eileen soon learned the age-old tradition of swabbing the deck. When they stood their separate watches on the 'scope and gauges, they were so tired they could hardly read the instruments, and when they turn-

bled into their bunks they were asleep in an instant.

Mitch could only hope that he remembered this trip well enough later, when he had time to enjoy it; he didn't have time now.

And Mercury grew to a brilliant globe ahead of them. They were coming in at an angle which showed most of the crimson-streaked, orange surface of molten rock that Mercury kept eternally faced toward the Sun's blazing ball. A band of green, red, and brown belted the little planet at the edge of its sunward face, and that faded into the bleak, frozen face that was kept eternally away from the Sun's heat.

MITCH CONTACTED the two Space Fleet destroyers orbiting around the planet and curved the *Trinket* in to join them. A spaceboat nuzzled up to the flank of the cruiser and gripped it with magnetic grapples. Then a sturdy, muscular figure swung across in bulky spacesuit. Mitch admitted him into the airlock and Eileen helped him out of the cumbersome suit.

"Now then, Mitchell," Commander Eckels began, as they sat smoking leisurely in the cruiser's small salon, "just how does this situation stack up?"

"Well, from what we and Colonial Control have been able to dig up," Mitch replied, "It goes like this:

"Criminal corruption has been creeping into the planetary governments for decades. In the past few years, however, somebody has gone to the trouble to organize this political corruption into an organization which covers three planets: Mars, Venus, and Mercury.

"It can't be proved, but we believe this mysterious 'someone' has been blackmailing a top official in *Molecular Transmutors, Inc.*, of Earth, who supply air-renewers for the three planets. This 'someone' forced the top official to alter the corporation records in such a way that it covered up sab-

otage of shipments of air-renewers after they had reached the three planets.

"As the air-renewers began breaking down, after they'd been sold to the settlers, this 'someone' had his political hirelings on the three planets start a campaign to remove the franchise on air-renewers and put each planet back on tanked-air supplies—which would be controlled and distributed by the political hirelings, as city-bosses—

"In this way, the political organization would hold the lives of all the settlers on Mars, Venus, and Mercury in the palm of their hand. They'd have complete dictatorial control, and this 'someone,' being the head of the organization, would naturally become dictator.

"By controlling the three planets, he would actually control most interplanetary commerce. If Colonial Control gave him any trouble, he could cut off shipments to Earth until Earth was ready to capitulate; in short, he would virtually rule the Solar System.

"So far, we believe that his headquarters are neither on Earth nor Venus. That leaves Mercury as the likeliest prospect, in view of the trouble they're having—"

"And we can't do a damned thing against him," Eckels concluded grimly, "until we have something definite to go on. The U.N.O. would rake us over the coals if we meddled in the affairs of any planetary government!"

"We'll need evidence to support our action," Mitch agreed; "that's why Miss Graham and I are here as Colonial agents."

"We have absolutely no trace on that black spaceship," Eckels muttered worriedly. "All franchised ships are accounted for, so it was either built illegally for them or they salvaged it as a derelict in space. D'you know if it's armed?"

"I only know it exists," Mitch said gravely.

"Well, we've two destroyers orbiting off Mercury, here—and two off Venus

and two off Mars—so we'll be ready for it if it turns up."

"Be ready to drag us out, too, if we get into a tight spot."

"Oh, we'll keep an eye on you!" Eckels chuckled disarmingly. "The Government of Mercury will no doubt want you to prevent their revolt for them, but just go in and get what evidence you can find and come out."

NEITHER Mitch nor Eileen were quite so sure it could be done that easily. They were silent with apprehension as Mitch sent the *Trinket* streaking into Mercury's thin atmosphere and brought her down in the long, deep valley where the domed city of Twilight Terminal glowed blood-red in the eternal sunset. The hull rasped gently on the gritty soil, and they wriggled themselves into their spacesuits—the planet's atmosphere was too thin for the human body.

They frog-leaped across the gray, level spaceport field, detouring around the giant hulls of spaceliners and shuttle-freighters, heading toward the domed city. On either side of the valley, steep walls rose beneath banks of verdant, green moss streaked with scarlet veins.

Twilight Terminal was a steel-and-plastic beehive under its dome. Constructed specifically to Mercurian conditions, the dome was a silvery, mirror-bright shield on the sunward side and transparent only on the opposite side. The buildings within were built up, down, cross-wise and sideways in an insane catacombs that was perfectly logical, considering the planet's light gravity. Sunlamps blazed down from the high-vaulted roofs of immense corridors, and down into deep airshafts. Colored lights glowed everywhere through translucent plastic walls, behind stores' display windows and the glass walls of apartment dwellings. There were neither walkways nor trafficways, but shiny loops and whirls of metal handrails that in-

terlaced the maze like swirling smoke, constantly moving on magnetic fields. People merely grabbed a handrail when they wanted to get anywhere: it pulled them off their feet and carried them along comfortably in the light gravity, hanging by one hand. All floor-surfaces were covered with a three-foot-thick layer of foamflex, sufficient to break a fall from the greatest height.

The people were, for the most part, small of stature, coming only to Mitch's shoulder. He stood at the glass wall of an office, looking down through a giant air-shaft at the people gliding along, one hand clutched to a handrail, like swarms of ants in a tremendous anthill. A few were dressed in fashionable garb, but most wore the rough coveralls of the mining industry. A very few carried weapons of any sort—the prospectors who worked the frozen night-side alone and responsible to no man. Not many could stomach that life.

"The situation is rapidly becoming worse," Mr. Yosuto Okihara, manager of *Molecular Transmutors'* offices in Twilight Terminal, was saying. "The city office-workers and executives and the ore-grader operators of the upper levels want tanked air, the robot-operators of the lower levels want air-renewers. The City Commissioners naturally side with the city people, and they're trying to cram tanked air down the robot-operators' throats. The robot-operators are ready to revolt!"

"The entire mining industry depends on them, doesn't it?" Eileen asked.

"Of course!" Okihara confirmed. "Without ore, the planet's entire major industry would grind to a halt. The robots must be kept working in the lower levels, digging ore."

Mitch turned slowly toward the gentle, singsong voice. Okihara was a small man with somewhat the same Oriental slant to his eyes that Mitch

bad. His hair was powdery gray, his eyes dark and quietly thoughtful—not a man moved to hasty action. He sat relaxed behind his solid black desk, facing Eileen. She was perched on the edge of her chair before the desk, her hands folded tensely in her lap.

"It's the ore-grader gangs who've had trouble with their air-renewers, isn't it?" Mitch asked.

Okihara nodded. "Those are the large B-109 models we install to supply the air in the chambers of the upper levels—they're about the same size as the ones used to supply the city domes, but with different humidifiers; the temperature beneath Mercury's surface is tremendous, this near the sunward side."

"You've checked those B-109's for possible sabotage?"

"Port Inspection has cooperated with us thoroughly. We've checked them as they arrived from Earth and after they were installed—no faults. When one breaks down, we find it has been sabotaged."

"Then it's not the fault of the air-renewers?"

Okihara pursed his lips cautiously before answering. "I don't think it is! Others disagree."

"Who?"

"Port Inspection, the mining syndicates, the government—almost everybody," Okihara smiled sadly. "It's a rather questionable detail."

He rose with a rustle of black silk and, striding over to a wall, threw a switch that projected a diagram on it. "Here and here," he said, tracing parts of the diagram with a long thin finger. "These are parts of special conductive alloys. Somehow, their crystalline structure is disrupted." He switched off the diagram and returned to his desk. "They think it's because the alloys are poor quality, and break down after short use; I think they have somehow been sabotaged."

"What about ultra-sonic vibrations?" Mitch wondered.

Okihara thought a moment, then nodded. "That might do it. But I am

not familiar with that sort of mechanism that would produce such vibrations outside the research laboratory."

"Have you had any other breakdowns besides the B-109's?" Eileen asked vaguely.

"No, but perhaps we shall. The robot-operators wear insulated suits on the lower levels, you know. If their refrigeration-units quit on them, they would be killed almost instantly; each suit also has its own air-renewer, of course, and it would be difficult to sabotage one of them without the wearer's knowledge. That's another reason I believe in the sabotage theory." Okihara grinned slyly. "If the air-renewers were being manufactured with poor alloys, why do only the B-109's break down? Why don't all of them break down?"

"Do the robot-operators think the B-109's were faulty?"

"I believe some of them suspect sabotage. You'd have to ask them—their union leaders would undoubtedly be willing to discuss it with two Colonial agents!"

"**WE** BEEN fightin' this tanked-air legislation every step of the way!" exclaimed Jack Brody. "And it ain't been without a little blood-lettin', either!"

He was a short, wide man with brown hair that stuck straight up and a powerful body shaped on the general specifications of a fortress. He hunkered forward in his chair, gazing up at them with the intent expression of a man who enjoys telling his troubles. His rough, oiled coveralls were a sharp contrast to their neat, snug grays.

"What do you mean, 'blood-letting'?" Eileen prompted him.

"I mean people gettin' beat up on their way home or to work," Brody said. "And the cops just grin at you when you make a complaint. They's a lotta punks roamin' the streets and shafts now, too, that useta be kept in their holes. Man or woman doesn't

know when they'll get jumped in a dark passage—especially if they're a robot-operator!"

Mitch dropped his cigarette on the floor and ground it under his heel. They were standing in the middle of a gloomy, dust-laden union meeting-hall—the letters on the grimy window said *Robot Operator's Local 982*—where Brody served as a director, in addition to being a superintendent in one of the local mines.

"This criminal element is allowed to make trouble for you people, then?" Mitch surmised grimly.

"They ain't the only ones!" Brody retorted. "It's the Mercury Police stoppin' us and askin' us questions, like *we* was the criminals! It's the city councils makin' speeches against us to the ore-graders an' white-collar workers, an' gettin' feelin's stirred up against us topside. I even know folks that took their kids outta school 'cause the other folks' kids was pickin' on 'em, and my own boy Timmy got sent home 'cause he licked the pants off a merchant's boy like I told him to!"

"And all because you people won't vote for the tanked-air legislation?"

"Ain't nothin' else!"

"Mr. Brody—" Mitch frowned. "Is there any indication that the ore-graders' air renewers were sabotaged?"

A crafty look stole over Brody's rugged features. "So *that's* what you're after! Can't say I can help you, Mitchell."

"Why not?" Eileen demanded sharply.

"'Cause if it is, you can't prove it!" Brody shifted uneasily. "I'll admit some of us has wondered about that. But it's always the new B-109's that break down—the old ones are still lastin' eight or ten years, like they ought to—"

"Only the B-109's break down?" Eileen persisted.

"Only the *new* B-109's," Brody corrected her. "The ones they install when a new ore-grader level is set up. They had one installed just a week ago that's still runnin'—"

"Could you take us down to have a look at it?" Mitch asked.

"Sure, I can get you down there." Brody rose and lumbered toward the door. "C'mon!"

THEY DESCENDED to a wide subterranean chamber with a transparent wall extending along one end. Tall double-portals were mounted in the wall, forming the gates to the mine entrance.

There was trouble at the gates. An angry mob was gathered before the gates. Between them and the gates were two rows of men. The first row carried atomic rifles and wore the mustard-colored uniforms of the Mercury Police; the second row carried placards and signs and walked back and forth in front of the gates.

"What's them pickets doin' there?" Brody wanted to know, and waded into the mob. As people made way before this charging figure, they noticed the gray-clad figures following him and a quiet hush settled over them.

Brody had collared another grim-faced man and was firing questions at him as Mitch and Eileen caught up. "What goes on?" Mitch asked.

Brody released the man and turned back, scowling. "The damn' ore-graders are picketin' the mines, keepin' the robot-operators out. They ain't gonna let us work 'til we vote like they want, damn 'em."

"What's the Police have to do with it?"

"Ask *them*!" Brody raged. "Them damned pickets already beat up three men. Willie there says they beat up a woman, too, which was why the crowd got mad; them cops moved in to protect the damn' pickets, now!"

"Easy boy," Mitch spoke soothingly. "I'll have a word with those cops." He shoved past Brody and reached the front of the crowd facing the Police line. Brody and Eileen moved up behind him.

The Police stood with their rifles held ready, facing the crowd. Their expressions were grim, wary—ready to

kill. Behind them, the shuffling pickets didn't look too happy; they kept eyeing the crowd half-fearfully.

Brody gave a snort of derision. "Lookit that picket line, would yah! There ain't a single ore-grader operator in that bunch of pug-uglies!"

Mitch dropped his hand to his blaster as he strode toward the watchful Police line. The troopers' rifles wavered uncertainly as they saw his space-man's gray. He noticed it with a grim smile. "Who's in charge here?" he bellowed at them.

A slim, handsome Police Lieutenant came briskly forward. "What can I do for you, sir?"

"You're protecting those pickets, there?" Mitch demanded.

The Lieutenant's smile half-appeared and then vanished. "They have a right to picket without molestation," he replied sullenly.

"They have no right to keep these people from their work," Mitch retorted. "Clear your men out of here!"

"I have explicit orders—"

Mitch drew his blaster. "Either let these people through," he said flatly, "or I'm *taking* them through!"

A ragged cheer broke out from the crowd. The Lieutenant's face darkened with anger. "You can't bluff me!" he snapped.

"Who's bluffing?" Eileen spoke up, brightly. She moved past Mitch, walking straight toward the Police line with her blaster levelled in her fist.

Mitch grinned and followed suit. He was walking straight toward the Lieutenant. There was a deep, grumbling sound from behind him—and the crowd was moving forward with them.

The Lieutenant's eyes widened; his jaw went slack. Then he spun and took to his heels, shouting orders to his men. The Police line whirled and jog-trotted smartly off to the sidelines. The pickets stared wildly after them, then dropped placards and signs—and clubs, Mitch noted—and bolted for safety.

Mitch and Eileen led the crowd through the gates and were immediately surrounded by shouting, laughing men and women. Brody pounded Mitch on the back and hugged Eileen. "You can own this damn' mine from now on, if you want it!" he bellowed gleefully. "We just won the war!"

"War?" Mitch yelled back. "What war?"

"The *union* war!" Brody howled. "Between us and the ore-graders! That was *their* damn' union's pickets you chased off!"

A CIRCULAR platform whistled down a transparent tube, past level after level of humming machinery and ant-sized human figures. Brody stood at the platform's control panel, half-turned and waving his arms at the passing panorama as they slid downward.

First came the technical levels, crammed with the machinery and power turbines which served the mine levels below; then came the ore-grading levels, where the ore itself appeared and was processed for shipment. The ore-graders were monstrous machines moving great bins of ore, sifting and sorting it. Ore-grader operators sat on saddles swung high on long booms, hovering over the machines and directing them with manual controls mounted before the saddles. Then came the loading-shafts, where the ore was lifted in bucket-chains from the diggings below. The platform eased to a halt in the midst of these shafts and Brody led them out into a large, barren chamber.

"This will be a new ore-grader level," he said gruffly. "The B-109's over behind that stack of pilings."

There were only a few lamps in the high ceiling, throwing bright shafts of light down into the dim, gloomy chamber. Mitch and Eileen followed Brody across the littered floor, around a black shadow of steel pilings. Suddenly,

Brody stiffened and lunged forward. "Who's there?" he bellowed. "Who the devil—"

A bright orange rectangle flamed in the far wall, then snuffed out with the metallic clang of a heavy door. Mitch caught a dim vision of a bulky figure silhouetted against the flames, then engulfed by them, before the door clanged shut—then he was stumbling forward in the darkness after Brody.

Brody cursed fluently, stomping around a large, square bulk of machinery. "Whoever he was, he had the cover open on this B-109!"

"Let's get him!" Mitch snapped, plunging on toward the door.

Brody grasped him in a steely grip, spinning him around. "You go through that door without armor and you'll burn to a crisp! That's digger country!"

"Then where do we get armor?" Eileen yelped excitedly. "Hurry! *That was the saboteur!*"

"Back to the lift," Brody growled, his teeth flashing in a grin. "That passage comes out in the robot-country below—maybe we can pick up the guy's tracks down there."

The platform slid downward again. Loading-shafts gave way to more chambers, brightly lighted, where mechanics checked over big, nine-foot robot-diggers. Brody stopped the lift and led them into a locker room, where they pulled on suits of mirror-bright armor. Brody had them check their air and thermal controls, then led them back to the lift. It slid downward again. Huge tunnels appeared, burrowing away into the darkness. Armored figures sat at control-panels, looking into viewscreens that seemed to show nothing but curtains of orange flame. The big robot-diggers rolled in and out of the tunnels on their steel caterpillar treads. Heavy ore-cars snaked in and out on narrow-gauge tracks. The lift stopped.

"We'll ride a robot down to the digger country," Brody said, his voice

sounding flat and metallic in their helmet 'phones. They clumped over to a row of control panels and he bent over a seated figure in armor. The figure turned as he spoke, and Mitch saw an attractive feminine face give Brody a smile through her thick helmet plate. A big robot came thundering up beside them and Brody swung easily up on its flat, protruding backside. He reached out and gave Eileen a hand up and Mitch jumped on beside them. The robot whirled and lurched down a tunnel. Mitch suddenly noticed that the rock walls of the tunnel were smoking.

MINUTES later, those rock walls were spewing sheets of flame from razor-thin fissures. The flame hissed and roared around them, engulfing them, bathing their armored suits. "Now you can see why we don't want no tanked-air," Brody's voice crackled in their 'phones. "With tanked-air, we could stay down here just 'til our air supply gave out—not long enough to work a full shift. We'd starve on the amount we'd earn on tanked air! With air-renewers, we can stay down long enough to earn a decent living."

The robot lurched to a stop and Brody leaped off. "That passage comes out about here and—" He broke off with a startled gasp as the robot suddenly extended a telescoping arm and laid a heavy, metal claw on his shoulder. He ducked out from under it and leaped away, deftly. A merry feminine laughter issued from the robot. Brody stood braced in front of it and cursed it and its remote operator with a through enthusiasm.

"Some of these operators gotta touch like velvet," he commented, turning to Mitch. "Only they just might slip a little, someday." He proceeded to ignore the robot, which was trundling back up the slanting, flame-lashed tunnel. He took Mitch by the arm and pointed toward an opening in the tunnel wall. "There's where the

passage comes out—the one that saboteur took. Now—”

He bent over, peering at the tunnel floor. “Been a lotta traffic through here. Maybe we can see his tracks—”

They advanced to the opening and studied the tunnel floor. “Nope. Other tracks has already covered his. See, there’s his tracks up and down the passage, but none here in the tunnel.”

“What’s that dark hole up ahead?” Eileen asked.

Brody straightened up. “Oh, that’s the old Martindale cut-off. Leads to an abandoned digging out on the night-side; frozen ground, no good for mining. Most mines got connecting tunnels like that, all around the Twilight Zone between day-side and night-side; that’s where all the mines are, and the domed cities of course. Now, this saboteur—” He broke off, contemptatively. “A hundred yards ahead, there’s a siding up off to the right with a cross-cut back to the Wilkes mine, west of here. He knows we’re after him, he might’ve taken that siding—there’s nobody in there now.”

“Lead on!” Mitch prompted.

They plodded onward through hissing, swirling sheets of orange flame. Sometimes the glare was so blinding through Mitch’s face-plate that he had to feel his way forward. Brody’s figure was a dim, flickering shadow ahead of him.

He wondered what they would do if they caught the saboteur...

THEY CLUMPED onward seemingly for hours. “See any tracks?” Mitch asked.

“Some,” Brody affirmed. “Dunno if they’re his, though. Wait’ll we get up to the cross-cut; they’s a bulkhead door there; if that’s been opened—”

They plodded onward. Flame hissed and bellowed around them. Blinding them, engulfing their grotesque, armored figures.

Suddenly, a deep gong rang in their ‘phones.

Brody stopped abruptly. Mitch stumbled into him.

“Wait!” Brody snapped huskily. There was no mistaking the sudden tension in his voice.

Then a snarling roar of static came into their ‘phones. And with it, a voice. Swelling, fading, trickling through the snarl. “*All robot-operators—emergency call, emergency call, emergency call! Attention, all robot-operators! Bandit-robots in the tunnels! There’s a gang busted into robot control topside and taken over thirty robots. They’re roaming around down there somewhere. Danger! Bandit-robots!*”

“Bandit robots?” Mitch exclaimed perplexedly.

“Robots bein’ run by somebody ain’t supposed to run ‘em!” Brody explained drily. “Listen, we want to get out of this alive, we better get back topside!”

“Alive? Why—”

“Look, Mitchell— I said you won the union war; now I ain’t so sure you did!”

“But—”

“But nothin’! *Them bandit robots is down here to kill!*”

“Okay, chum, that’s all I wanted to know.” Mitch whirled and scrambled back along the tunnel.

Then he froze, staring ahead. Back the way they had come. Brody bumped into him and cursed. “Get goin’!”

“Wait a minute!” Mitch gasped. “*Where’s Eileen?*”

Brody stared past him and muttered another curse. Then he squeezed past and grabbed Mitch’s gloved hand. “Hang onto my belt; I can move faster than you.”

They came out of the siding into the main tunnel just in time to see three robot-diggers coming up from one end and a larger, wider robot coming down from the other end. “A blaster!” Brody yelled, dragging Mitch back into the siding. “Down!”

But before he could pull Mitch to

the floor, the four robots met. The larger robot shot out a piston-like arm intended to blast the face of mine-tunnels and one of the robot-diggers exploded with a thunderous roar. The second digger hurtled forward, knocking the piston arm aside. Searing energy bit into the wall of the tunnel.

The whole front of the siding collapsed. Tons of flaming rock piled across the main tunnel. Mitch was caught behind the shoulders and thrown forward into a crack between two boulders. He rolled over on his back and stared upward, just in time to see Brody rise and reel drunkenly out from the siding. Brody clawed up onto the pile of rubble and collapsed.

Then the third digger came growling over the rubble, its steel threads spinning. The treads bridged the crack over Mitch and crossed above him.

And they caught Brody's helmet and crushed it flat.

Mitch clawed his way out of the crack and stared around the tunnel. The two vanquished diggers and the big blaster-robot were buried under the rock pile. The third digger was nowhere in sight.

He stumbled up the tunnel the way they had come, trying to remember twists, turns, forks and branches they had passed riding the robot. He couldn't remember. *He had to!*

He had to get help. Eileen—wandering in the flaming tunnels...

A dark opening stood before him. Three sets of tracks showed plainly in the soft muck of its floor. A man's, coming and going. A girl's going.

He followed them.



THE LONG, sleek Space Fleet destroyer came gently to rest beside the dull gray dome of

the abandoned mine. Spacesuited figures poured from the destroyer's airlock and skipped lightly over the frozen surface to the dome.

Mitch sat hunched over on the low cot with his head in his hands. Commander Eckels stood over him, sadly.

"They were here," Mitch said flatly; "Eileen found them. And they've got her. I got here too late."

"I was too late, too," Eckels said softly. "Did you find anything?" He didn't mean the corpse sprawled in the next room with its chest blown open. One less criminal to worry about.

Mitch shoved something from under the cot with his foot.

Eckels stared down at it. Then he stooped and picked it up. It looked something like a hand-gun of some sort. On its plate was stamped *Industrial Vibrators—Mars*.

"So it's Mars," Eckels said.

The stars burned still and bright in the black heavens. The destroyer floated serenely among them. Only on the control bridge was there any sign of movement: the Sun shrank to a burning, thumb-sized splotch behind the glowing jets; ahead, a faint, ruddy spark swung slowly into the destroyer's path, growing to a bright red orb crisscrossed with the dark lines of canals—the planet Mars.

Forty-two chronological days slipped past as the long, gun-studded steel hull floated in starry blackness.

Mitch prowled the ship's corridors, a dull, hot hatred burning inside him. Forty-two days—and the outlaw spaceship was only hours ahead of them; they couldn't overtake it and attack, not with Eileen a prisoner aboard it.

Forty-two days for a girl trapped in a steel shell with a gang of killers. Mitch knew perfectly well what that meant. For an innocent, decent girl, it would be enough to drive her insane—Eileen might stand it; Mitch didn't

know. But he knew what it meant.

He knew, too, that strange frame of mind when a man's impulsive urge to kill became a coldly logical part of him. He could kill, now, without the least compassion...

And he knew the man he was going to kill.

Eckels had almost caught them—Eckels and the young Colonial Inspector at Twilight Terminal, who lay sprawled in the gritty dust of the Mercurian spaceport field with his head blown off; it had been that close.

THE BLACK spaceship was no longer black when it came gliding toward Mercury. A man in spaceman's gray contacted Mercury Control and received clearance to land, identifying his ship as the *Zodiac* and himself as Keith Hugenaut, Pilot-Astrogator.

It seemed a normal clearance, but the Colonial Inspector at Twilight Terminal happened to be checking the traffic lists at Mercury Control. He also happened to remember that the *Zodiac* was supposed to have disappeared on an expeditionary flight to Uranus seven years ago; she was finally assumed lost with all hands.

Obviously, she wasn't lost. Also, one man of the entire former expedition was still alive. What had happened to the other members? It wasn't too hard to guess; strange things happened, sometimes, to a group of men entombed for months in a steel shell. Especially if one of them went mad.

Especially if it was the madness that would prompt a man to think he should be dictator of the Solar System.

The human mind was an intricate, delicate mechanism. They could psycho-test a man and determine whether he was sane and therefore eligible to ride a spaceship. But no psycho-test could reveal how, when, or what could shatter that sane human mind; there was no positive way to determine when any one man would go insane.

A ship vanished on an expedition.

Seven years later, she reappeared, commanded by a man who had been Pilot-Astrogator on that expedition. The Colonial Inspector went out to where the ship was being refueled and asked some questions.

His head was blown off.

When Commander Eckels learned of the murder, he had to send his junior officers down to Twilight Terminal to investigate the Inspector's past movements before he learned the facts about the *Zodiac*. By then, she had the spaceport field, cleared unsuspectingly—the Inspector's body wasn't found until later—for a short flight to the abandoned Martindale mine. Eckels arrived there too late; just in time to meet Mitch.

But Keith Hugenaut was their man.

The Space Fleet destroyer blazed its jets across space toward Mars. Its communications screens were humming with activity. Colonial Control at Marsport informed them that *Industrial Vibrators* manufactured ultrasonic vibrators used in testing light-alloy metals for tensile strength. Production of light-alloy machinery was the major industry of Mars, since the planet's surface abounded in the lighter minerals. The vibrators were perfectly good for checking the tensile strength of these alloys, showing in a few seconds just how long they would stand up under so much computed stress.

Eckels' Atomic Engineer reported that if such vibrators were used on highly conductive alloys, as in the air-renewers, such vibrations would disrupt the crystalline structure of the alloys and damage their conductivity, so that such alloy parts would finally break down and fail to function properly. One man with a small hand-vibrator could do the job, and it would never be suspected unless you knew exactly what to look for.

MEANWHILE, situations which Colonial Control had stirred up to flush the black spaceship from hid-

ing were rapidly reaching a climax. On Mercury, newspapers and telecasts were referring to "*The War of the Robots*" and lambasting both the ore-grader operators' union and the politicians and city-bosses who controlled it. Public sentiment was changing in favor of the robot-operators—and the graft-ridden Mercury Police couldn't stop it. The thugs and killers in the ore-graders' union had overstepped themselves; the city-bosses were in hot water.

On Venus, a newspaper publisher named Sawtooth McKane had launched a campaign against the city-bosses and their tanked-air legislation, with the complete aid of Mike Semanichek. And when certain trumped-up charges were proffered and the Venus Police closed in to arrest the two men, they found themselves looking into the gun-muzzles of the Colonial Police; there, too, the city bosses were in hot water.

The corrupt political organization which had spread itself across three planets was rapidly breaking apart. Small-fry were confessing to save their own hides; the evidence was piling up.

On Mars, the tanked-air air-renewers controversy had revolved around the one major class-distinction of the planet's society. There were the people who lived in the major domed cities surrounded by great humming factories; then there were the people who roamed the deserted wastes prospecting for surface ores and minerals for those factories, living an isolated, nomadic existence with only occasional contact with civilization when they returned for supplies to the smaller domed cities along the cultivated canals. These stubbornly independent wanderers needed only air-renewers to subsist; they processed Martian vegetation for food, lived in inflated balloon tents and travelled across the chill desert sands on foot. Mars had been the first planet colonized by Earthmen, and there were several hundred

millions of these nomadic families and tribes, scattered thinly over the whole planet.

They needed only air-renewers, then the air-renewers began to fail. A stirring of hatred, of revolt, moaned through the cold Martian winds. These wanderers felt only disgust for the people who lived the soft, comfortable life in the domed cities. That disgust was beginning to turn to hatred. The air-renewers failed. The city dwellers were blamed; didn't they get their air-renewers from the cities?

Colonial agents had been sent across the cold sands into the wind-swept wastelands. A new rumor went trickling among the nomadic tribes. There was conspiracy reaching to Venus and Mercury; air-renewers were being sabotaged before they were sold; a political machine was deliberately stirring the wanderers to revolt against the politicians' enemies. The wanderers decided to let any politicians kill their own enemies, and settled down to wait; hatred faded back to mere disgust.

The organization crumbled, the plan failed. And destroyers waited off three planets for the black spaceship to appear.

It had. And Eckels had missed it.

Keith Hugenaut was their man, and Mars was the planet. Mars, where Hugenaut had learned about hand-vibrators and hatched his devilish scheme. There was plenty of evidence to prove interplanetary conspiracy, now; the Colonial Police swung into action. On Earth, George Kimball broke down under questioning—he had known Keith Hugenaut personally, years before the ill-fated Uranus expedition; he had embezzled *Molecular Transmutator* funds, juggling the records to make it appear that Korbelasco had overcharged them; Hugenaut had found it out and blackmailed him into backing the conspiracy; Posovski, the production manager, had become suspicious, learned too much,

and Hugenaut had killed him. The whole sordid scheme became clear.

So it was Mars—and Eileen Graham.

THE DESTROYER swung into an orbit and a spaceboat curved away to plunge into Mars' thin atmosphere. It came screaming down to the spaceport field outside Marsport and slammed its fins into the rippling sands.

"Hugenaut and his gang could have their hideout anywhere in that lawless wasteland," Commander Eckels said dourly, turning his spacesuited figure to survey the bleak, red hills beyond the field. "Our agents may have found something out there by now, though."

"The south quarter of the Western Hemisphere," Mitch reminded him; "your orbiting destroyers tracked him down by radar, remember?"

"Half a hemisphere is a lot of country," Eckels retorted grumpily. They plodded across the field toward the domed city, each man silently pursuing his own bitter thoughts.

Hospital Decontamination passed them with a clean bill of health and a few antibiotic shots. They checked their spacesuits with Port Supply and strode grimly into the large, domed metropolis, two tall, spacetanned men in neat gray with blasters strapped to their thighs. "Where the devil's that Colonial Inspector?" Eckels wondered. "I called for him to meet us here!"

They gazed about them in puzzlement.

Mitch saw it first. Perhaps because he was thoroughly inured to the strange sights and sounds of interplanetary civilization—he paid scant attention to the tall, graceful towers, the moving walkways and trafficways interlacing them, the tiers of roof-gardens, or the bronzed people milling about wearing scant costumes, or those near the city's locks who wore fur gar-

ments with harness and helmets strapped over their shoulders. He took a brief notice of the few strikingly attractive women who walked past, wearing mere strips of decorative covering—and then he looked up, and there it was.

The broad telecast screen was mounted above the crowded ramp. Bright green lettering blazed from its transparent surface:

*IN T'P L'N'T A R Y CRIME-KING
CAPTURED!
GIRL BRINGS IN OUTLAW SHIP!
POLICE GIRL QUEEN OF SPACE
KILLERS!
CRIME GANG SURRENDERS TO
GIRL!*

Mitch gaped up at it, speechlessly. He grabbed Eckels' arm and pointed up at it; they stared unbelievably.

"Commander Eckels?"

A bland, smiling Colonial Inspector stood before them in full-dress uniform.

"Eh?" Eckels gasped. "There you are! What the devil does this mean?" He waved at the telecast screen, excitedly.

The Inspector glanced up at it and his smile broadened. "That happened just a few hours ago, sir. Sorry there wasn't time to inform you, but I'll endeavor to explain—if you'll step this way, please? Our car is waiting."

MOUNTED MARS Police on unicycles preceded the gray official car as they skimmed along the curving trafficways. Colonial Inspector Channing introduced himself, shook hands with Mitch and launched into his explanation.

"It came as quite a surprise, of course, after hearing from you people that Miss Graham had been taken captive," he said. "She came flying out of the desert on an airsled with Keith Hugenaut lashed to the seat beside

her—he's a manic depressive, incidentally. Penal Correction will have a time with him!

"The story, it seems, was this: the gang did take her captive and brought her off Mercury in the *Zodiac*. But Hugenaut's wild scheme was tumbling about his ears and he was beginning to have trouble with his cutthroat crew. Miss Graham played her cards right and began winning over the ship's crew during the trip to Mars, until she finally managed to engineer a mutiny among them and get herself elected to the command of the ship.

"After that, she made a deal with the crew to have the *Zodiac* landed near Marsport, in an isolated region where these cutthroats would have the time and opportunity to scatter and lose themselves so the Police couldn't catch them. In return, she was given Hugenaut as her captive and was told the location of his hideout here on Mars—our agents are on their way there, now, to clean it out—

"In short, it was as neat a bit of police work as you could ask for! Miss Graham has proved herself a most capable agent, gentlemen." Channing laughed happily. "I might add that I've been married four times, yet she looks good even to me—and that, if anything, is the prime requisite of a good woman intelligence agent!"

The car, with its siren-howling convey of Police, pulled up on the ramp of a large government tower. They dismounted and were ushered by guards in full-dress uniform through the glittering corridors and anterooms where Mitch and Eckels left their blasters with a bowing major-domo. Then they were being led into a vast, spacious ballroom where symphonic music throbbed on the air. The ballroom was jammed with dignitaries, men in dress uniform, women in beautiful evening gowns.

"A little celebration to honor the event," Channing explained, simpering.

People were turning to stare, from

groups along the sidelines and in couples gracefully circling the ballroom floor. A murmur of excited conversation swelled above the music as the two men in spaceman's gray strode slowly forward, their features expressionless.

Then the throngs parted and there she was. Mitch stopped, gazing at her. The music faded away and a hush fell over the room.

SHE WAS a vision of feminine loveliness, a dream as old as the memories of mankind. A veil of opalescent scarlet was draped from her creamy thighs, split clingingly over her ivory legs; tiny crests of scarlet lacquer were painted upon her breasts. She gazed at Mitch with that familiar, direct look of hers, and swayed slowly to meet him. The music swelled up again and a vast sigh echoed around the room as she slipped into his arms and they glided out across the floor. Other couples joined them and the celebration went on.

"It's so good to feel your arms around me again," she whispered in his ear.

"I like it, too," he murmured; "you had me worried, darling."

She pulled back from him, gazing up at him. "You should have known, shouldn't you?"

"That you would capture the gang-leader all by yourself?" He forced a grin on his lips.

She kissed him, lightly, and they danced on. They were both good at it. Mitch remained silent, waiting...

Then she told him. "It really wasn't too difficult," she began hesitantly. "There were two of the lieutenants who really led the gang—they weren't too hard to influence. For a sweet, innocent girl, I suppose, it would've been impossible—" The words came rushing from her, now. "But there was fear that their scheme was failing and they were beginning to hate him anyway—Hugenaut, I mean—so it wasn't

too hard. Not for a girl with the right sort of experience, a girl who knew how—" She looked up again, that direct look. "I had to make a few concessions, of course."

"I understand," he murmured. He took her arm, leading her off the floor. They slipped quickly through a side entrance and emerged out on a broad terrace.

THE CITY hummed around them, beautiful in the eternal twilight that was Mars. Through the dome above, the Sun was a blazing orb so small it was almost lost in the blue-black sky where stars twinkled faintly, though it was midday. They leaned on the railing, close together, and Mitch took out his cigarettes and shared them with her.

"I think you wanted to tell me you loved me once, Mitch," Eileen murmured, smoke trickling from her lips. "That's the only thing I'm sorry about."

Mitch smiled grimly. *You never know!*

"What are your plans, now that it's over?" he asked her.

"My plans? I have a corporation that must be managed." She gazed out over the city, a faintly bemused expression on her face. "I'll have a husband or two, I suppose, and perhaps a few lovers." She turned, then, and slipped her arms up around his neck. "I'd like to be loved now, Mitch."

"Would you?" He turned toward her.

"But not by you!" She pushed away from him, smiling radiantly. "Don't ask me why, Mitch—please. It's a woman's secret."

"All right." He turned back and leaned on the rail. *You never know!* his thoughts repeated.

She moved close to his side again. "What are your plans, darling, now that it's over?"

"My plans?" He gazed out over the

beautiful, colorful city. Then he began laughing, softly. *His plans?* His laugh grew louder as he swung back to her.

"I'm retiring—didn't you know? There's two hundred and five thousand credits waiting for me back at Port Luna, enough to keep me in comfort for the rest of my life. I'm through knocking around the Solar System, Eileen!"

She gazed up at him, searching his face for something she couldn't find. "I certainly don't blame you for that," she murmured, finally. "Good luck, Mitch!"

She kissed him soundly, then, and whirled away to run swiftly back to the ballroom.

Mitch stared after her, a loose grin twisting his mouth. Then he looked up, through the crystal dome, at the dark Martian sky. The sky of eternal morning, where the stars glittered in cold irony. And his grin shared their irony.

Retire? Sure! It was back to Earth for him, back to the mother world—and all her pageantry and festival for a lonely soul. He'd hunt in the American forests with bow-and-arrow, ride girded and armored on a medieval charger, bid for the captive girls dancing at the slave-markets, swim the lagoons with the slim, brown maidens of the Pacific isles! Man, *how* he'd retire!

He leaned on the rail, alone, smoking and grinning to himself.

And a slender, bronzed girl looked up from a terraced garden below and smiled at him.

YOU HAVE A VOTE

and if you would like to see longer feature stories in this magazine, let us know. If you don't want to see long feature stories, let us know, too; we'll go with the majority!



"Look, Godwin! There's your illustrious ancestor!"



ROGUE PRINCESS

FEATURE NOVELET

By **L. SPRAGUE de CAMP**

It's a mad, merry mixup when Claude Godwin, star of 21st Century costume pictures, finds himself involved with a princess of Greenland, kidnapped, and told that he is the rightful heir to the throne of England. Not that Godwin enjoys being the Saxon Pretender, but the alternatives are even less to his liking!



CLAUDE GODWIN became involved with the princess as follows:

In driving north from Santa Barbara, most people follow Route US 101, which cuts inland across the base of Point Conception. Some, however, take the secondary road that runs along the seashore around the Point—via Jalama

and Surf—leaving 101 at Gaviota and rejoining it at Arroyo Grande. It is a winding road, much of it blasted out of cliffsides where the Santa Ynez Mountains come right down to the Pacific. The road runs along a rugged and almost unpeopled stretch of coast, forming a great contrast with the shores southeastward, which—ever since California became the most populous state about the year 1990—have been almost solidly built up from Santa Barbara to San Diego.

On an October afternoon Claude Godwin was driving his fellow-actor, Westbrook Wolff, along this scenic

Monarchy has a tendency to persist as a half-serious game, long after all the meaning of "kings" and "queens", etc., has departed from a nation's life. In its proper place, this can be a rather charming anachronism, but there's always the possibility that someone, or some group, may try to "restore" the throne in earnest. This aside, we can look upon such problems as "legitimacy"—no joke in past centuries, when prolonged and devastating wars often accompanied a change of sovereigns—with amusement, as Mr. de Camp does here. A delightful dissertation on one of the reasons why the head who wears the crown rests uneasily.

stretch and explaining why he intended retiring at the early age of thirty-one:

"...so I can make thirty grand a week; what good does it do me? Coming on top of the income from my securities, Uncle gets ninety-four dollars out of every additional century, leaving me a lousy six bucks, which will buy one Sunday newspaper."

Wolff sighed. "Wish I knew how you did it. I've known a lot of actors, and never yet knew one who could save up enough to live on in ten years. By the time Uncle, and your agent, and your ex-wives have all had a crack at your stipend—"

"Not to mention the parties; the ponies; the contractor who puts in your swimming-pool; the tailor who makes you a suit a week out of imported Tibetan yak-wool, and so on. I avoid the alimony problem by staying single; I live in a small house without a swimming-pool and stay away from parties and ponies.

"That's why they call me MacGodwin," he concluded. He was a dark young man, handsome in a histrionic way, and rather on the small side. For hero roles the studio put lifts in his shoes.

"But then you're not a typical actor," said Wolff; "in Hollywood you stand out like a sunflower in a coal-scuttle."

"I am an individualist; you are eccentric; he's nuts. I never did like the damned show-business anyway. What I always wanted was to be a scientist. You know, like that Doctor Rotheiss I played in *Crimson Dawn*."

"Why don't you?"

Godwin sighed in his turn. "You just don't walk into a casting-office in some scientific institut. and get taken on as an electrogeologist. I did go see old Dr. Goff—you know, the president of Cal Tech. I told him I knew I wouldn't stay young and handsome forever. Hell, I'm no great actor; I'm just a guy who can jump around in front of a camera with a wig and a sword and leer at the dames. Well, I told the old geezer about my secret craving. Says I: 'Dr. Goff, I think I could be a real honest-to-Godwyn scientist if I had a chance, but how do I go about it? I can't see enrolling here as a frosh with the sobsisters from all the papers and picture-mags breathing down my neck. So what?'"

"He squints at me and sprinkles some cigar-ashes down his shirt-front, and says, 'Take this,' and hands me a book off his desk. 'Go through it and do all the problems; then come back. If you still wish to become a scientist we shall go on from there.'"

"Did you?" said Wolff.

"That's the sad part; even sadder'n when I got bumped off in *Fatal Decision*. It was a math book: plane, solid, and analytical geometry. I struggled through about half and gave up."

"Doesn't sound like you, Claude."

"No, does it? But I got to where the funny little diagrams and equations and things just went round and round when I looked at them. I *couldn't* make sense of them even by sitting up all night over a bucket of coffee. May-

be if I'd had a normal education, instead of being in show-business from the age of six weeks, it might have been different. But it's too late to go back again and begin over, like I did in *Three Wishes*."

Wolff yawned and stretched. "Oh, well, maybe there's some other science that doesn't require so much math. Say, haven't we seen enough of this Godforsaken scenery? How about a stretch on the beach?"

THEY HAD just come around Point Arguello and the road was undulating along a stretch of sand-dunes between the Coast Range and the sea. Godwin looked for a place to park and presently found a turnout; he stopped the Studebaker and got out, not bothering to raise the top because at that time of year the climatic engineers allowed rain only on Wednesdays.

They climbed down the sandy, grassy slope to the beach. A few yards away, a heavy surf boomed against the hard-packed sand. The beach was a small crescent, with its concave side facing seaward—perhaps a hundred yards long—and terminated at each end by a rocky promontory. The landscape seemed devoid of human life. Shoreward the olive-brown hills bore a scattering of oaks among the scrub.

Godwin took a sharp look to make sure that he could see his car from where they were, and started north. At the promontory, he and Wolff had to scramble over the rocks and found themselves at the beginning of another little crescent of sand. They plodded north to the next promontory and were climbing over these rocks when Wolff (who being the taller was in the lead) drew in his breath sharply and held out a hand in warning.

Godwin halted, thinking that perhaps his friend had surprised a family of sea-lions or some such denizens of the wild. Wolff silently beckoned.

Godwin moved up beside the other actor.

Just beyond the rocks, at the beginning of the next beach, a girl was lying nude on her back upon the sand, asleep in the sun. She was a girl of pretty good size—"brawny" was the word that occurred to Claude Godwin. She was moderately pretty in a flat-faced, Oriental way, as if she were part Asiatic, but there was nothing Mongoloid about the carrot-red hair stirring in the breeze. Dark glasses protected her eyes from the sun, and her head lay on a handkerchief spread out upon the sand. Beside her a neat pile of clothing was held down by a small camera.

Wolff whispered: "Boy, ain't that something? What'll we do?"

Godwin murmured: "She's liable to get a bad burn sleeping in the sun that way, even this late in the year."

"She probably didn't mean to go to sleep; but we can't exactly wake her up to tell her so."

"N-no. On the other hand we can't just walk off as if nothing had happened..."

"Say!" hissed Wolff. "I got an idea!" He outlined a plan.

"Swell," said Godwin. "But which of us does what with what?"

"Oh, I take it and you're in it."

"No sir! You'd make a better model than I."

"Can't! I'm running for king this winter!"

"Let's flip then."

WOLFF WON the toss. He cautiously climbed down and picked up the camera, while Godwin removed his clothes and piled them on the rocks. When he was as nude as the girl he climbed down and stood beside her.

"If she wakes up now we'll have some explaining to do," he whispered.

"Don't make me laugh or she will. Now lie down beside her. No, on your back; no point doing it on your stomach."

Wolff retreated a few paces, adjust-

ed the camera, and took a photograph of the recumbent pair. The automatic film-winder purred faintly and stopped with a click at the next frame. Godwin started to rise, but Wolff motioned him back, took two steps, and shot a picture from another angle.

This time Godwin did get up. While Wolff replaced the camera on the girl's pile of clothing, Godwin climbed back up on the rocks and dressed with guilty haste. When he had finished, both men crept down off the promontory on the south side and hiked swiftly back the way they had come. When they had put enough distance between themselves and the girl they let out their pent-up mirth in raucous war-whoops, capering and slapping each other on the back. "Boy, wait till she gets those pix back from the drug-store!" "What I wouldn't give to see her face..."

"Hey!" said Godwin suddenly. "Suppose she recognizes me? I may not be Hollywood's most popular actor, but my puss does get around. My agent says I packed 'em in at Julianehaab in *The Honor of the Clan*."

"What's Yooly-anna-hawp?"

"The capital of Greenland. Since the climate-control boys melted off the ice-cap, the Greenlanders have become the world's most fanatical movie-goers. There's nothing else to do on the long winter nights."

"You mean, not much else. But I wouldn't worry; your last few pictures all had you wearing a mustache, so they wouldn't know you without it."

They came to the place where they had first reached the beach and climbed back up the slope. When they were back in the car, Godwin drove slowly, peering ahead.

"Whatcha looking for?" said Wolff.

"Her car. She musta parked somewhere; nobody lives along this stretch... Ah, there it is!"

He slowed to a crawl as they came abreast of another parked automobile. This was a typical Hollywoodian vehicle: an enormous pink Cadillac con-

vertible with imitation python-skin upholstery. Godwin said; "You'd swear that was a star's car, now wouldn't you? But I've never seen our sleeping beauty around the studios."

"Neither have I. She doesn't look to me like star-material, anyway; she might belong to some actor or producer."

Godwin speeded up, saying, "We could look up her license-number, but it's not worth the trouble. And what do I wanna get involved with strange dames for? I got enough trouble holding off the ones I know already."

"Well, you'd have a time convincing anybody who sees those pix you're not involved with her." At Godwin's look of alarm Wolff added; "'S all right, Claude old boy. When the paternity suit comes up I'll testify for you; I'll say you're impotent."

"That would be a big help. But I'm not worried; I look different without my makeup, and I'm too short to run for king, like you; and some day I'll quit this racket anyway."

Westbrook Wolff did indeed intend to run for King of the United States of America, at the decennial contest to be held in Washington in December. For, following the wars and revolutions of the twentieth century, the world—in a frantic search for stability and security—had revived the obsolete institution of monarchy. The United States had done so in a more rational manner than most nations. Instead of the nation's entrusting the choice of the monarch to the vagaries of heredity, the king and queen were chosen from Hollywood's bravest and fairest for ten-year terms at a beauty-contest in which the U. S. Senate served as judges.

IN DUE COURSE, Claude Godwin returned to Hollywood. After several months of miscellaneous movie work he was chosen for the title-role of Sabatini's *Scaramouche*, being remade for the eighth time in two cen-

turies. When inevitable delays postponed shooting for a few days he let himself be talked into attending a party at the house of his leading lady, Gloria Malloy.

About twenty-three hundred Godwin surveyed the scene and found it not to his liking. In one corner, Gloria Malloy was giving the English actor, Beaumont, the lowdown on the sexual aberrations of Hollywood, in the process accusing practically every denizen of cinematographic jungle of being queer in one way or another. In another corner, Vakassian, the script-writer was complaining to Cuevas, the bit-player, about the crass materialism of the motion-picture industry. In the third, Gloria's husband, Lauder the cameraman, was making love to Cuevas's wife. The fourth was occupied by a roaring crapgame involving Finkelman the producer, Novalis the director, and McCarthy the sound-technician. McCarthy's girl had fallen into the swimming-pool and had been sent home in a taxi, while Novalis's girl had passed out and been carried upstairs to recover.

Claude Godwin had heard and seen it all before and found it boring. Despite his almost complete lack of formal education, he liked to picture himself as a serious thinker, interested in world affairs and the latest advances in the arts and sciences. Inevitably, he found that very few cared to discuss such matters, and those few usually had some axe to grind and were willing to lecture him on their pet obsession but not to listen to his replies. "To hell with it," he said, and let himself quietly out the front door just as Gloria plunged into an account of the alleged necrophilia of Horton the singing-cowboy star.

The Studebaker was parked in the driveway behind Finkelman's all-chrome Mercedes-Benz. Godwin got in, started the engine, and pressed the button that actuated the parking-wheels, so that the car should sidle crabwise out of its space without the necessity of cramping the wheel. (This

was now regular equipment on Super De Luxe Ultra Imperial models; on the plain Super De Luxe Ultra Special or standard line it was extra.)

Claude Godwin set the control lever on the steering-column for sidewise travel, stepped on the foot-brake, released the hand-brake, and started to let the foot-pedal up slowly, when he became aware that something was not normal. Some whisper of sound told him that he was not alone in his car; that there was, in fact, a man crouched behind the front seat...



WHEN HE came to Claude Godwin was lying on a bed. As he opened his eyes, he gradually became aware, first, of the ceiling; then of the pajamas he was wearing; then of a large window through which he had a view of rather barren looking greenish-gray hills under a gray sky; then of something on his left wrist.

It was a handcuff, and attached to the handcuff was a tall, broad, moon-faced, 250-pound man with prominent blue eyes and a fringe of faded blond hair around a pink scalp covered with the fuzz that resulted from the persistent use of trichogenone, the hair-growing hormone.

"What the hell?" said Godwin.

"Yes?" said the man. "You are feeling better now, ha?"

"Better? Than what? Where am I? Who are you? Why was I snatched? How long have I been out? What's the idea of this bracelet?"

"Vun at a time. First, I am Sven."

"Sven who?"

"Sven Kaalund. But ve shall be friends be, yes? So you call me Sven; I am calling you Claude."

"Well, isn't that damned decent of you! And where am I?"

"Dis is de King Edvard Hospital in Julianehaab, in Greenland."

"Greenland!" Godwin shouted. "But why? What have I got to do with Greenland?"

The moon face smiled. "You vill everyting in time learn. Meanvile, please to be a good boy and do as you are told."

"The hell you say!" yelled Godwin. Propping himself up on his left elbow he swung a right at Kaalund's jaw.

In a calmer moment, Godwin might have admitted that it was a silly thing to do. Although he had had occasion to learn boxing in the course of his employment, he was hardly in a position to land a real blow; nor was he, at 145 pounds, fairly matched with his vast opponent. But Godwin was anything but calm.

Sven Kaalund moved his big head and raised his right shoulder so that Godwin's fist bounced off the deltoid muscle as off a truck-tire.

"Yeow!" yelled Godwin.

A terrific pain had shot through his left wrist, doubling him up into a foetal position. It was gone in an instant, and Godwin relaxed. He now looked more closely at the other end of the handcuffs. Instead of a twin of his own cuff encircling Kaalund's wrist, the cable attached to his own cuff ended in a gadget something like a knuckle-duster, gripped in Kaalund's great fist. A guard ran across the back of Kaalund's hand; and on the other side of this object were buttons, on one of which Kaalund's thumb rested lightly.

"I told you to be good," said Kaalund in the tone of one reproving a child.

Godwin recognized the Kobik neuronc stimulator, the outstanding improvement in the art of inflicting pain since the time of Torquemada. Godwin almost wept with frustrated rage, but then pulled himself together.

"What are you?" he asked.

"Detective, first-class, of de police department of Julianehaab."

The door opened and a nurse said something.

"*Han gar man inte uden Forskyn-delse,*" said Kaalund. "*Sage on Opha-everan at man kan ham snakkes.*"

The nurse disappeared. Not knowing Danish, Godwin could not follow the conversation. He relapsed into glowering silence while an interne took his temperature and blood-pressure and other bodily indices. When the interne (who like most Greenlanders showed a mixture of Danish and Eskimo descent) finished his task and departed, Godwin asked his man-mountain, "What now?"

"You shall yust for de boss wait."

"Who's he?"

"Prime Minister Gram. I do not know vat about you so important is dat the head of the de whole country is coming to see you, but dat is how it is."

GODWIN stared out the big window at the bleak landscape, noting the dwarf willows and birches sparsely scattered over the craggy hills. The hospital must be located on the outskirts of Julianehaab, for there were only a few houses in sight. The melting of the ice-cap by the climatic engineers a century before, while it had made Greenland into a modern nation with a huge habitable area and a lusty and growing population, had not converted it from a miniature Antarctica into a tropical paradise. Instead the land had become something like a large insular combination of Iceland and Norway, with the damp climate of the former and the snag-toothed mountainous coast-line of the latter.

The door opened and in came a lean dark bald man with a long droopy nose. Sven Kaalund jumped up, saying, "God Dag, Excellens!"

The man replied in almost-perfect English: "Good-morning, Kaalund. Good-morning, Mr. Godwin. I am Anker Gram. How are you feeling?"

"Like plain and fancy mayhem," growled Godwin. "What is this? I'm an American citizen, and you can't go

snatching me all over the world! I won't stand for it! My government will make a stink—"

"On the contrary, my dear Mr. Godwin, you *will* stand for it," said Anker Gram.

"Huh?"

Gram drew a brown paper envelope from the inside pocket of his jacket: an envelope of the sort that photographic service establishments send back prints and negatives in. Gram took out two prints and handed one to Godwin, saying, "Does this look familiar?"

The print was obviously one of those that Westbrook Wolff had taken eight months previously of Godwin and the red-haired girl lying nude on the beach near Point Conception. The color of her hair came out fine.

"Guk," said Godwin.

"And now this."

Gram extended the other print, a portrait showing the same girl, seated, clad in a shimmery evening-gown with a tiara on her hair. This picture was of the sort that actors like himself had made up in great numbers to send their fans, and true to form it bore in the lower right corner a facsimile of a longhand legend reading: *Hjertlige Oensker, Karen af Groenland.*

"What does it say?" said Godwin.

"Best wishes from Karen of Greenland."

"You mean Karen's a name? That—uh—she's—"

"Certainly; it is the Scandinavian equivalent of 'Catherine'. And the young lady, if you have not yet realized the fact, is Princess Karen, the only child of our king, Edvard III of Greenland."

"But—what—that is—I didn't know—"

"So she maintained her incognito throughout your liason? I knew she had entered the University of Southern California under the name of 'Karen Hauch', which is of course her true laic name: Agnes Brigitte Karen Leonora Margaret Arrebo-Hauch. She seems to have shown more prudence than—"

"What d'you mean liason?" cried Godwin; "I never even saw the dame, except when that pic was taken!"

HE DESCRIBED the jape to Gram, who shook his narrow head.

"It is a fine story, and from your air of virtuous indignation one might almost believe it if one did not know better."

"How do you know better? Was you there? All the evidence you got is that fool pic, which shows us acting a little unconventional, maybe, but—"

"Unconventional!" said Gram with a grin. "No, my fine American bird, you will never get anybody in Greenland to believe that, especially as your countrymen are a byword for uninhibited lechery. And since the medical evidence was inconclusive, and most of the population has heard a rumor of one sort or another, we find it necessary to act accordingly."

"How'd they find out?"

"That is simple. When the princess finished her roll of film she air-mailed it back to Julianehaab for developing and printing by her favorite photographer, Hans Tungak. When he saw the prints, he knew something was wrong and took up the matter with the government."

"So what?"

"We naturally sent a mission to the United States to escort the princess home before she could get into any more trouble. Incidentally they found who you were from the pictures and brought you also. That was perhaps not strictly in accord with international law, but since one of Tungak's assistants, who also saw the photographs, had talked, our hand was forced."

"But why? Even if I had done what you guys think, what good does it do to kidnap me to this god-forsaken piece of Arctic real-estate?"

Gram smiled thinly. "Perhaps you are familiar with the legendary American institution called a 'shotgun wedding'?"

"You mean you want me to *marry* the dame?"

"Precisely."

"I won't!" yelled Godwin; "I'm damn well gonna stay a bachelor until I feel like changing!"

"You will not find the position of consort difficult; your material wants will be well supplied."

"Hell with that! I got all the dough I need. In fact I was gonna quit the movie racket. I don't care if the Prince Consort brushes his teeth with a platinum toothbrush set with natural diamonds. I'm gonna do what I want when I want it, and I ain't gonna marry no lady wrestler..."

Gram let him rave until he ran down, then said: "You forget, Mr. Godwin, we have means of coercion available. Has Kaalund demonstrated his special manacle yet?"

"Yeah."

"Well, either you shall go through the ceremony in a civilized manner, or we will have Kaalund stand beside you as best man, with his handcuff on your wrist so that should you balk he can apply the necessary stimulation. Would you like a cigar?"

"Thanks," said Godwin and took the proffered smoke; then wished too late that he had spurned the offer in righteous wrath.

"You see," said Gram, puffing, "you Americans take a very cavalier attitude towards sex, like the Eskimos from whom we Greenlanders are partly descended. At least such is the impression given by your fiction and your cinema. In fact, since paternity is, among you, usually a matter of some doubt, I note that when you adopted the institution of monarchy you made it elective, so that the problem of legitimacy should not trouble you. We, however, look upon things differently. Our monarchy operates on strictly legitimatist principles, and we therefore cannot have our princesses running around and—ah—mating with all and sundry."

"I tell you I never—" began Godwin, but Gram continued.

"I was opposed to Karen's going to California alone for just that reason; but she is a usually sensible girl and persuaded her father to her way of thinking, so I weakly gave in. And now we must—how do you express it?—pay the devil."

"Even if you make me do this, I won't—I'll—I'll run away and get a divorce at the first chance. You can't keep me locked up the rest of my life."

"I do not believe that will be necessary. There is another possibility that will, I think, reconcile you to your—ah—fate."

"Yeah? It better be good."

"It is; it transpires that you are the beneficiary of the most amazing coincidence in history."

"Well?"

"You are the legitimate heir to the throne of Great Britain."

GODWIN stared at the other for a moment. "Huh? Ga wan, you're loopy!"

"It has been proved, I assure you."

"What's the matter with George XII?"

"He is merely the descendant of the usurping bastard Duke of Normandy, William Fitz-Robert, while you are the heir of Harold Godwinson—otherwise Harold II—the last Saxon king of England."

"You mean the guy who got bumped off at the Battle of—uh—Hastings?"

"The very one. Harold Godwinson's children by his mistress Edith Swan-neck being ineligible, you are the oldest legitimate descendant in the male line of his posthumous son by Aldyth, Harold Haroldson."

"Ulp. And you mean you're gonna talk the Limies into kicking out George and putting *me* in his place?"

"That is the idea."

Godwin tugged at his hair with his free hand. "I never heard of such a crazy idea in my life! I must be in a booby-hatch and you're one of the inmates!"

Gram relighted his cigar. "You shall

sec. Your accession to the British throne will not be so difficult as you suppose. For one thing the British, like most people, have made a fetish of legitimacy in recent decades. For another George XII is unpopular for his vices—a thoroughly maladjusted type.”

“Wait! Last winter I played a supporting role in *Bonnie Prince Charlie*. I dunno much about the real history—you know how the script-writers always hash it up—but it was something about a guy who claimed to be the rightful King of England and invaded Scotland to prove it, but got chased out again. They had us running around in kilts and wigs and talking with Scotch accents. Well, why couldn’t the descendants of this Charlie guy have something to say about your project?”

“Oh, you mean the Jacobites. The answer is ‘no’, for several reasons. The English Parliament decreed that James II, having become a Roman Catholic (this being a time of religious controversies) was ineligible to be king, and the succession was therefore vested in his daughter Mary and her husband Prince William of Orange, a grandson of King Charles I who lost his head. Then when William and Mary died *sine prole*—”

“What did they die of?”

“Without issue. The crown went to Mary’s sister, Anne. In the meantime, Parliament had passed the Act of Settlement in 1701, which named as Anne’s successor a granddaughter of James I, whose husband was Elector of Hanover; when Anne died in 1714, this woman’s son became King George I. The Jacobites claim the line should have gone to James II’s son James Stuart, and then to this man’s oldest son Charles—the fellow in the cinema, and then to Charles’s younger brother Henry of York. Then when Henry died leaving no more descendants of James II they should have gone back to the descendants of Charles I, through his daughter

Henrietta, who married Duke Philip of Orleans—”

“Stop! You got me dizzy with all these Jameses and Charleses; what happened to the Jacobite claim, finally?”

“Oh, nobody has taken it seriously for centuries. It got into the royal house of Sardinia for a while and then into the royal house of Bavaria. Just now the pretender is a young man named Werner von Wittelsbach, a German living here in Greenland.”

“Why does he live here?” asked Godwin.

“I arranged that our leading magnate, Thor Thomsen, should offer him a job here he could not afford to refuse, so we could keep an eye on him. And where should he live? The Germans do not want him because he is also the Bavarian pretender, and Bavaria is now under the Austrian crown; and the British will have not have him because Jacobitism is high treason by their act of 1707.”

GODWIN said: “I remember from a book that one time there was a Danish king of England named Canute or something. What happened to his line?”

“The claim of Knud the Mighty comes down to the modern Danish royal house through his nephew, Knud II, since both his sons died *sine prole*. The Arrebo-Hauchs are related to this line, but only by a cadet branch. And as the present King of Denmark will have nothing to do with such an enterprise, we must resort to the remaining line of pretenders: the descendants of Harold of Wessex—which means you, my friend.”

“How do you know? They didn’t have birth-certificates in the Middle Ages, so you can’t trace a line over a thousand years. Who ja think you’re kidding?”

“Ah, but we can! Have you ever heard of Viggo Bruun?”

“Nope.”

“Naturally not, because we have kept his work quiet. Dr. Bruun is the

world's greatest authority on terrestrial magnetism. He discovered the Bruun effect."

"What's that?"

"A permanent impress left in the magnetogravitic matrix of our planet by every event that happens on its surface; something like the Akashic Record of the occultists. By means of an instrument he has developed, Dr. Bruun can photograph these impressions. The instrument is called a parachron, short for 'parachronoscope'."

"You mean if you took this here gadget you could see the Battle of Waterloo being fought over again?"

"More or less."

"My Goldwyn, what'll they think of next? But what's this got to do with me and your nutty king scheme?"

"Simple. We have made records of the entire lives of Harold Haroldson and his descendants; we have been working on it for several years, and now have a huge library of the lives of historical characters."

"It'd sure be a big library; a roll of film to give one man's whole life would fill a good-sized room."

"Not so bad as that. You can condense a lot, for example cutting the periods of childhood and sleep. For genealogical purposes, you only need the first twenty years or so—up to the time when the man begets his eldest child."

"Could I see some of these movies?"

"Certainly, as soon as the physicians say you may leave. Quarters have been prepared for you at the palace, and the faithful Kaalund will accompany you. Now you must excuse me, please. I take it the prospect of royalty no longer appals you?"

"I'll think about it. But wait: you never said why you Greenlanders are going to all this trouble. What's in it for you?"

Gram smiled. "A matter of high politics. You know that, in theory, the King of England reigns but does not rule. However, he has some influence as *ex officio* chairman of the Commonwealth Conference, under the Act of

Parliament of 2035—especially right now when the governments of the Dominions are evenly divided over the Assam problem. We wish to accomplish several things, such as taking Greenland out of the Scandinavian Union and into the Commonwealth; a British King faithful to our interest would be very useful. And now good-bye; I shall see you soon."

THOUGH he thought it more prudent not to say so outright, Godwin had made up his mind to resist this lunatic scheme to the last ditch, as well as the plan to marry him to Karen. So they'd put him up as a figurehead King of Great Britain with the idea that Gram could always control him through his wife! From what he recalled of the proposed wife's brawn, perhaps Gram had something there, too.

While Gram had recovered the print of the photograph by Wolff, he had left behind the portrait photograph of the girl herself. Godwin glared at it. A handsome wench even if a little big and squarish. She must weigh nearly as much as he. He pointed to the inscription, *Hjertlige Oensker, Karen af Groenland*, and asked: "How do you pronounce that?"

Kaalund obliged with a jerky, guttural singsong. Godwin, staring at the print, was struck by the thought that Gram might have left it with him in the hope that he should fall in love with it. He cast it from him, saying, "Sven, put that thing on the bureau, face down. I don't care if she's Crown Princess of Greenland or Queen of Mars; the less I see—"

The door was opened by a nurse who stepped to one side and curtsied as another woman entered. Kaalund heaved himself erect again and bowed, crying,

"*God Dag, Hoeched!*"

Godwin blinked and looked again. Yes, it was the red-haired girl on the beach: Karen Hauch, Princess of Greenland.



CLAUDE GODWIN stared. His imagination had been adding little by little to his unwanted fiancée's thews until he pictured her as a veritable female gorilla; and here she turned out to be not so big after all. She was better-looking than he remembered her even if not quite the beauty that the photographer had made her out in the portrait.

"Well!" she said. "So you are the terrible Claude Godwin!" She spoke with less accent than Sven Kaalund, though her English was not so flawless as the Prime Minister's.

"That's right," he said. "I suppose you want to see what your partner in sin looks like before it's too late?"

"You need not be so nasty, Mr. Godwin. After all it was your own doing that got us into this fix, and I am not liking it any better than you."

"But you know nothing *happened!*"

"Are you sure?"

"I think you would have woke up," he said dryly; "so why didn't you tell 'em so?"

"I did but they did not believe. My poor father was terribly shocked by that photograph. So now I am stuck with you."

"What's so terrible about me?" he retorted, stung. "Lots of dames think a movie-star's a pretty good catch."

"Oh, I did not say there was anything really wrong with you. In fact one might say you were quite pretty." (Godwin winced.) "But you know what self-centered and immoral people actors are, and I could have had the captain of the U. S. C. football team; he was a *big* man."

"Is that so? Well, I could have—" began Godwin hotly, then thought better of what he was going to say. "But let's not fight over who got rooked the worse on this deal. I don't

suppose you have any idea how to get out of it?"

"No-o", she said, with a glance at Kaalund, who was taking all this in. "We shall have to make the best of it; perhaps love will come after the first ten or twenty years."

Godwin realized that they could not make any serious plans for evading their fate in Kaalund's presence, and that Gram was determined to keep Godwin under close surveillance until he had accomplished his aims. While Gram's political objectives sounded no more wicked than most political maneuvers, the thought of being used as a passive pawn in this game made Godwin clench his fists with rage.

"Your sense of humor," he said, "is well-developed but gruesome. When they gonna let me outa this box?"

"Tomorrow, they tell me. And now I must leave to shop down-town for my—how do you say—torso?"

"Trousseau," said Godwin with a shudder. "You got the other already, worse luck."

"And to keep you from being bored by the wait, I am giving you these." She brought out of her handbag a white paper bag which she handed him, saying: "*Ne les avalez pas; serrez-les entre les dents.*"

"Hey!" Sven Kaalund spoke up. "No languages I am not understanding! You speak English, Dansk, or notting else!"

Godwin blinked in bewilderment. He had a limited knowledge of French, dating back to an abortive singing career, and it seemed to him that she was telling him not to swallow the bag but to do something to it with his teeth.

"Thanks," he said.

"It is nothing. I shall be seeing you again, yes?"

"All too soon, I'm afraid. G'bye, Miss—uh—what *shall* I call you?"

"The people here say 'Your Highness' but that is too formal for your betrothed. And I do not know you well enough—for 'Karen', because we Greenlanders are not using first names

everywhere as you do in the United States. So call me 'Miss Hauch'."

"Okay, Miss Hauch. S'long."

She was gone. Kaalund rumbled: "Let me see dat bag, Claude. I am here from being poisoned to stop you as vell as other tings."

Godwin wordlessly handed over the bag. Kaalund looked in and handed it back. "Gumdrops!"

Godwin took out a gumdrop. Now the pattern became a little clearer. She must have said something like "Do not swallow them; hold (or pinch) them between the teeth." If it had only been possible for her to repeat the sentence...

He gripped a gumdrop firmly between his molars. It softened and dissolved with the passing of the minutes. Now, if she had meant to convey a message in one of these things, it would be in some sort of capsule. He would have to eat his way through the entire bag to be sure.

When the first gumdrop had gone the way of all confections he took a second. Kaalund looked at him with a mouth-watering expression, but Godwin hard-heartedly ignored it and continued to consume the candies himself. It would hardly do to have the message-capsule eaten by his guardian. The detective muttered something about; "I see vat she meant by de kind of people actors is!"

Godwin continued devouring his way through the bag. When he had eaten over half the gumdrops, he came to one that felt a little different from the others. It had a hard core, and as the gelatinous outside dissolved away his teeth closed down upon this object, not much bigger than a vitamin pill. As he wondered whether he would have to hide the capsule under his tongue until Kaalund was asleep so that he could investigate it more closely, a buzzing sensation in his teeth startled him so that he almost dropped the thing out of his mouth.

Recovering in time he gripped the capsule more firmly. The thing contained a tiny sound-record player

which had been actuated by the pressure of his teeth, and which was now playing off its record. The sound was transmitted through his teeth and skull so that he could hear it quite clearly though nobody else could. He heard, *Mr. Godwin! Mr. Godwin! This is Karen Hauch. By now you know of Minister Gram's plans for us. I do not wish to marry you and I suppose you feel the same way. Our only chance of escape is by air, but I do not know if I can make arrangements; see if you can bribe Detective Kaalund.*

The record stopped. Godwin bit it again without result. He had heard of these phonographic capsules; the only way to repeat the record would be to unscrew the casing and wind it up again with a microscopic screw-driver. After some thought Godwin swallowed the capsule.

That left the rest of the gumdrops. Although this was probably the only one with a message, there was a chance that another might contain a similar capsule with further plans of escape. He therefore did not dare hand over the rest of the bag to Kaalund, though he was already sated with the taste of gumdrops. He kept right on eating, remarking to the ceiling, "You know, Sven old man, my studio would pay plenty to get me back pronto. We were just gonna start shooting *Scaramouche*, and it'll raise hell with their plans if they gotta dig up a new star at this late date."

"Unh," said Kaalund.

"In fact I'm not exactly broke myself. If I chipped in, the guy who arranged to have me sent back to Hollywood would pick up a nice piece of lettuce."

"Ha. You tink I am vun of your corrupt American policemen, so you can bribe me to let you go, huh? Vell, dis is *Groenland*, Claude, and de sooner you learn de difference the better off you are. No more bribes, please."

Godwin stewed a while in silence,

then said, "Say, don't they have anything to read in this dump?"

"Do you read Dansk?"

"No."

"Den it would no good do you. De newspapers and books in de hospital library is all in Dansk, except some in Eskimo."

The door opened again and the nurse spoke to Kaalund, who reported: "Another visitor, Claude. My, such a popular fellow ve got!"

THE VISITOR turned out to be a stout, eyeglassed young man who bounced in and said effusively, "I am glad to meet you, Mr. Godwin! I am Karl Bruun, the son of Viggo Bruun. We understand you wish to visit my father's laboratories?"

"I did say something of the sort to Gram."

"Would tomorrow morning suit you?"

"Okay, if they let me out by then. Do you work in this lab?"

"Only on my off-time. I am a whale-herd."

"A what?"

"I herd whales. The bowhead whale, once almost extinct, is one of Greenland's main economic assets."

"How do you do it? I mean, d'you chase 'em around with a motor-boat?"

"No, with a helicopter. I also have to be ready to drive off orcas. Just now, my relief has the machine out. We shall see you tomorrow morning, then. And by the way, lest you be bored while awaiting your release from the hospital, I brought you some gumdrops." Karl Bruun handed over another paper bag. "They taste better if you grip them between your teeth and let them dissolve slowly. I must be running: good-bye!"

Godwin glared into the bag. Another capsule message? He grimly popped the first into his mouth...

This time he had to go through nearly the entire bag, while Kaalund glowered at him and made Danish noises in his throat. At last he came upon the one containing the capsule.

The message said, *Mr. Godwin? You know who this is. If you do not like your situation we may find it possible to cooperate, for there are those who would like to do, with that upon which the present stasis depends, that which you would like to do with yourself. If you agree, signify by saying, when you meet us, "The gumdrops were superb."*

Now what did that mean? They (the Bruuns, he supposed) evidently wanted to help him somehow, but he could not make any sense of that long and involved third sentence. He would play along with them anyway to see what happened.

He finished the bag, crumpled it, and threw it into the waste basket just as the nurse announced another visitor. This was a tall blond young man, of pure Nordic type, with several scars crisscrossing his face who began, "Godwin? I'm Werner von Wittelsbach. My boss, Thor Thomsen, sent me to ask if you were comfortable."

"I'm doing about as good as you can in jail."

"Mr. Thomsen will be glad to hear it. By the way, he thought you might like these."

And the young man thrust forward a third bag of white paper. As Godwin took it, von Wittelsbach said: "He suggests you go through the gumdrops before you start on the big piece."

Godwin, looking into the bag, saw that it did indeed contain a number of gumdrops and, at the bottom, something that looked like a small chocolate-bar wrapped in aluminum foil.

"Thanks," he said with notable lack of enthusiasm.

THE FACE of Werner von Wittelsbach, who was standing by Godwin's bed, now underwent a noticeable change. Up to now the young man had behaved with the correct and colorless affability of any well-brought-up man sent on such an errand. Now, however, there was a glitter of animosity in his eye and a hostile edge to his voice as

he said, "So you are the so-called Sax-on Pretender, eh?"

"The—? Oh, that. So they tell me, though I think it's a lot of fertilizer. And you're the—uh—Jacobite Pretender, huh?"

"I am the rightful King of Great Britain. We shall see, sir, whose claim prevails."

Thereupon von Wittelsbach brought his heels together with a click, bowed, and stalked out. Godwin had never seen anybody click heels outside of actors playing parts in movies about Old Vienna; he did not suppose that anybody actually did it in the twenty-second century. Yet there it was.

"Herregott!" said Kaalund. "Are dey trying vith gumdrops to poison you? You better not eat dem all; they make you sick."

Godwin glowered at his jailer and went grimly to work on the gumdrops, though by now the taste almost nauseated him. This time the one with the capsule was the third one he ate. The message ran, *Claude Godwin! If you wish help in achieving your objective of escaping from Greenland, hide the chocolate bar in the parachon tomorrow morning and leave it there. That is all for the present.*

Godwin sighed. Everybody seemed anxious to help him to escape except Kaalund and Gram, the ones who really mattered. And why should they want him to leave a chocolate bar in the time-viewing machine? Was Thor Thomsen trying to sneak a message to the Bruuns, too? Or was it a bomb to blow up the machine? That seemed unlikely; if Viggo Bruun were a man of any sense, he would have at least one complete set of plans of the parachon in a safe place. He might even have filed applications for patents, in which case the machine's principles of operation would eventually become public knowledge. There was no such thing as a secret invention anymore; even if there were, why should Thomsen wish to blow up such a marvelous machine?

Anyway, Thomsen had been the

only one to sign off at the end of his message so that Godwin would not have to eat all the other gumdrops to make sure they had no capsules in them. Accordingly Godwin removed the chocolate bar from the bag and tendered the rest of the gumdrops to Kaalund, saying, "Like some?"

"Tank you."

"Keep the whole bag."

"Tanks; I told you you would not feel good if you ate too many."

THE DETECTIVE went through the rest of the gumdrops like a devouring flame. In a few minutes they were all gone. An orderly came in and spoke. Kaalund said, "He wants to know vat you vish for lunch."

"Tell him thanks, but I don't want any lunch."

"I told you! But dat is no reason vy I am starving." He spoke at length in Danish to the orderly who went out and returned with a tray heaped with enough food for two ordinary men. Kaalund fell to with his free hand while Godwin, bored and restless, stared gloomily out the window.

"Sven," Godwin asked, "if the climatic engineers had such success in melting the ice-cap off Greenland, why don't they do the same with Antarctica? That's a lot bigger than Greenland."

"Sure," said Kaalund with his mouth full of *Smoerrebrod*, "but so much vater would de level of the de oceans raise maybe ten, twelve meters, and vat would happen to all de sea-ports? De melting of the Groenland cap raised it about a meter and a half, and some cities like New Orleans raised a awful stink."

Kaalund finished and summoned the orderly to remove the tray.

"You know, Claude," he said, "I am not feeling so good neither. Maybe I should not be eating on top of dose candies..."

The orderly removed the tray. Godwin, glancing at Kaalund, felt a

shock of alarm. The man's ruddy round face had taken on a mottled hue, and sweat glistened on his forehead.

"I got a *fordoemme* belly-ache," muttered the sufferer. "I must telephone for my relief to come quick so I can.... *Owl!*" The big man grunted and doubled over. "Hey, Claude, push de button! Somebody is poisoning me!"

With a bellow of pain the detective rolled out of his chair to the floor.



THEY TOOK the moaning Kaa-lund away, and presently another detective came in and picked up the hand-grip on the other end of Godwin's handcuff. This was a smaller man, black-haired and flat-faced, who introduced himself as Nick Kirdlavik.

"Is that an Eskimo name?" said Godwin.

"Yes."

"Are you Sven's regular relief on this job?"

"Yes."

"What's gonna happen next?"

"Do not know."

"Do they know what's wrong with Sven yet?"

"Do not know."

The man was not a sprightly conversationalist. Presently, another detective and a couple of uniformed cops came in and poked around the room. They gathered up the remains of the gumdrops and retrieved the empty bags that had contained the first two lots from the waste-basket. The detective asked Godwin a lot of questions that brought out the stories of the three bags of gumdrops, though Godwin refrained from telling about the message capsules.

Godwin finally asked, "Was he poisoned? How is he now?"

"He vas. Ve think it vas meant for you, whom it vould have killed quick, but he is so big it vill not hurt him much. He vill be back to vork in a couple days."

"Who's trying to poison me?"

"That is vat ve are trying to find out. It might have been your last visitor, or any of the people who prepared and brought the lunch."

Godwin did not know of any motive for Thomsen's trying to murder him—though never having met the man he was in no position to judge. The name of Werner von Wittelsbach had entered his mind at once. The man did have a motive, even though a screwy one. But while Godwin hesitated to tell about this, the detective bustled out.

The afternoon was dull. In answer to his loud protests the hospital personnel finally dug a battered book in English out of their library: *The Theory & Practice of Chicken Farming*, by John H. Pappakostas, N. Y.: McGraw-Hill, 2097, 347 pp., \$49.50.

Claude Godwin groaned and covered his eyes with his free hand.

Next morning he was awakened by a tug on his wrist and Kirdlavik's voice: "Hey, Mr. Godwin, vake up! The doctors is examin'g you to see if you can go out!"

Examination showed that the effect of the drug that had kept him unconscious during his transportation to Greenland had wholly worn off. Kirdlavik unlocked his handcuff long enough for him to dress.

"Where am I going?" he asked.

"To the palace; they got a room there for you."

"Yesterday, Gram said I could visit the lab where Bruun's got his parachron. Why couldn't I stop there on my way?"

"I vill see." Kirdlavik spoke Danish into the telephone, then said: "You may." While the policeman had been telephoning, Godwin slipped the seem-

ing chocolate-bar into his pants pocket.

When Godwin had finished dressing and had eaten his breakfast, still another detective arrived to take the place of Kirdlavik, who was yawning from his all-night vigil. Otto Malling, a tall thin knobby man with faded blue eyes and a handlebar mustache proved more communicative than the dourly silent Kirdlavik and started off with a lecture on the beauties of Greenland in general and the Julianehaab region in particular: "...and you *must* take a ride out to the Oster-Bygt where is the ruins of the houses Eric the Red and his people made when they came here in 982..."

GODWIN was not overly impressed by Julianehaab, where the bicycles outnumbered the automobiles, though it did have a quaint, old-fashioned air with its field-stone houses with small windows and steeply gabled roofs. The taxi purred up a winding street towards an academic-looking group of buildings.

"The University of Greenland," said Malling. "The laboratory is this building separate from the rest. You understand, I suppose, that the parachron is a secret yet; you must not talk about it to anybody except those like Doctor Bruun who know already."

"If it's so important, wouldn't the news leak out?"

Malling shrugged. "Plenty of rumors is floating about, but so long as nobody knows exactly, no harm is doing."

Malling showed his identification to the uniformed cop at the front door of the laboratory building. Inside, they waited in a small front office, where Malling exchanged chaff in Danish with a girl secretary. Presently two men entered: Karl Bruun and an older man with a white goatee introduced as Viggo Bruun. Both Bruuns had their sleeves rolled up and were dirty from tinkering; they wiped their hands on pieces of waste and shook hands.

Godwin said, "The gumdrops were superb."

"Good," said the elder Bruun. "You wish to see the parachron, do you not?"

He led the way through featureless concrete halls to an automatic elevator where another policeman stood guard. On the second floor of the building he led them from the elevator to a large room at whose door stood still another gendarme.

"Why all the cops?" asked Godwin. "Even if this machine works—I mean, in spite of the fact that it works, I don't see why the secrecy."

Bruun said, "It is Anker Gram's doing; he has all sorts of profound political plans connected with the parachron. Besides, he thinks some criminal might destroy the machine lest it be used to view his crimes in the past. This machine should eliminate crime and clear up a lot of mysteries like the Aarestrup fraud."

The elder Bruun led them into a laboratory room littered with the usual clutter of wires, tubing, electric cables, glassware, stands, clamps, meters, old copies of technical magazines, and ash-trays made of discarded scientific apparatus. In the middle of the room, on a massive bench, stood the parachron, a thing somewhat like a television set without its cabinet, but much larger. Besides the viewing screen facing the door, the machine bore on top a gadget with a parabolic reflector, something like a small radar antenna.

Viggo Bruun continued, "We think that is all foolishness. This is science; we should take it around the world to solve the great historical problems, and not waste time in political maneuvers and tracking down petty pickpockets."

"If you had to track them down," said Otto Malling, "you would not take such a yolly attitude about them."

"Perhaps not, my friend," said Bruun. "But if this works that way a lot of you fellows will be out of jobs, because a crew with a parachron can

visit the scene of every crime and get all the evidence to convict right there."

"If the lawyers don't have the machine outlawed, because it makes it too hard for their clients to make an honest living by robbery," said Malling.

BRUUN turned back to Godwin. "Some day, maybe, we can take the parachron down between Latitudes Thirty and Forty North and really find out something about history; meanwhile Anker Gram says no, and he is the boss."

"You mean," said Godwin, "you gotta lug the machine around to the places where the things actually happened? You can't just sit here in Greenland and twiddle knobs and see the Battle of Waterloo?"

"That is right; you cannot. Actually, the magneto-gravitic matrix precesses about three degrees to the West per century, so the impressions of the Battle of Waterloo would be—let me see—" (he glanced at a wall map) "—about where the southwest tip of England is now." Bruun sighed, a far-away look in his eyes. "If I can only live long enough to get it down to the latitude of Alexandria and photograph the lost books in the Library..."

"How ja get the pix Gram says prove I'm descended from that King Harold?"

"We flew the parachron in one of the whaling helicopters down to the middle of the Atlantic, between fifty and fifty-five North, and fifty and fifty-five West. The whole life-history of King Harold and his immediate descendants is there. It is quite a job, because if you start shooting on a stormy day the wind makes the helicopter—how would you say—wobble about, so the pictures wobble too."

"Look, Dr. Bruun. I'm no scientist, just a dumb actor, but I know a *little* about probability, and it sure doesn't stack up that I should be the guy to get—uh—involved with the Princess Karen, and at the same time to be

the eldest whatsit descendant of this old king. That's too much like drawing two pat royal flushes in a row."

Bruun smiled faintly. "You cannot argue with facts, my friend. Would you like to see the parachron in operation?"

"You bet!"

Bruun turned to the machine. "Karl, put the quintode tube back in. You see, Mr. Godwin, you can't see much right here, except the neighborhood of Bergen about the year 420 A.D., or the Oslo region about 320. And they are not very impressive."

Karl Bruun replaced the tube that had been taken out of the machine, the windows became opaque and the room dark except for the faint glow of vacuum-tubes inside the jungle of rods and wires and condensers. Viggo Bruun twirled knobs until a ghostly light appeared on the viewing screen; then a blizzard of flickers and flashes like a television set out of tune.

The image cleared. Godwin found himself looking at a rugged landscape with a body of water in the distance.

"Bergen Fjord," said the elder Bruun.

As the scientist turned more knobs, the antenna on top revolved, and the image on the screen swept around in a panorama. The image was black-and-white, surprising to Godwin who had been brought up on color in photography, cinematography, and television.

Bruun said: "We are about the tenth of June, 421 A.D. As I remember, there is a man who goes close by here..." The image jerked as he made an adjustment. "There he is! Take a good look."

A MAN WAS walking across the view. Though Godwin could not judge his size well without familiar objects to compare him with, he got the impression of a short man. He was dark and shaggy, clad in rough woollens: a kind of kilt wrapped around him under the armpits and reaching to his knees and a shawl over his

shoulders. He bore a bag on his back and gripped a staff in his free hand. As Godwin watched, the man passed out of sight.

"Very few people in Norway and Sweden at that time," said Bruun. "You have to hunt hard to find one. Mostly they were a miserable lot of Lapp-like folk living along the shores and digging clams. The big migration of Nordics from Jutland had not yet started."

"How far back can you go? To the age of the dinosaurs?"

"Oh, my, no! In the theory you can go back twelve thousand years, the time required for the matrix to precess clear around the earth. In practice the image gets fuzzy when you try to go back more than five thousand. There is one nice view a little older than that..."

...The scene shifted, and Godwin was looking at a huge herd of bison drifting through snow-covered woodland.

"That is near modern Upsala," said Bruun. "If we go on back and eastward all we see is Russian and Siberian forest—hundreds of years and thousands of miles of it."

Godwin asked, "How about those movies of my ancestors? Got any here?"

"Yes."

Viggo Bruun spoke in Danish to his son. The parachron was switched off. There were clicks and whirrings in the dark, and a motion-picture image sprang into life on one concrete wall.

"This," said Viggo Bruun, "is the first reel of the Harold of Wessex series. That is King Harold marrying Aldyth. It wobbles a little because of the wind the day we photographed it."

The scene—black-and-white like the direct view, and badly lighted—showed a man and woman in early-medieval costume standing before a man in ecclesiastical garb. The first man was a tall, broad-shouldered clean-shaven fellow with a crown on his square-cut blond hair.

"Those are Earls Edwin and Morcar, who made all the trouble," said Bruun. "The little fellow at the right of the scene..."

"Say," said Godwin, "that Harold guy looked all right; he'd have made a good actor."

"Quite a heroic character, but you ought to see the other Harold he fought against, King Harold Sigurdson of Norway. There was a legendary character in real life! Now the wedding is over and they are going in to the wedding-feast..."

As the film ground on, Godwin remarked: "It just occurs to me this'll put the costume-movie out of business. You could dub in the sound. Who'll pay to see an actor playing Lincoln when he can see Lincoln himself?... Say, this damn thing doesn't give a guy any privacy at all!"

"That is right. With the parachron you can really find out who is descended from whom." After a further pause Bruun said, "Here are a few sequences of the Battle of Hastings, to give continuity."

Looking at the confused and dust-obscured scene, Godwin said, "We could put on a better battle in Hollywood. Look at those extras just standing around! Half of 'em aren't earning their pay."

"Let me remind you that this is the real thing, my friend."

"Well, then your King Harold needed a good director. Maybe the costume-movie has a future after all, if this is what the real thing looks like. But I'll say one thing: the censors wouldn't let us show guys' guts and gore spilled all over the place the way this does. Oh-oh, there's your King Harold all haggled up!"

"He is dead. Now," said Bruun, "we come to the birth of Harold Haroldson..."

It occurred to Godwin that now was the time to secrete the chocolate-bar in the parachron. But he could not do it, even if he could get away with it. Though he was not a scientist,

the thought of destroying a valuable scientific discovery, the life-work of this nice old bird Bruun, was repugnant to him. He would even rather marry Karen.

The reel came to its end. Bruun threw the switch that let daylight into the room again, saying, "We have all the rest, showing the birth of Harold Haroldson's eldest son Stigand Haroldson, and his eldest son Godwin Stigandson, and so on. We can establish that the senior branch is the Godwin family of York and follow them down to the nineteenth century when birth-records became general and genealogists preserved the pedigree of your family. Shall we have lunch now?"

GODWIN was surprised at the speed with which time had flown. After lunch the Bruuns excused themselves and Godwin asked Malling, "What do we do now?"

"Whatever you like, so long as I get you to the palace by seventeen hundred. You must be there in time for the bethrothal banquet tonight."

"The *what*?"

"Has nobody told you? The king is giving a party, your engashment to Princess Karen to announce; all the bigwigs will be there."

"Well, how about visiting that oyster-bug or whatever you called it?"

"The Oster-Bygt? Sure, we got time enough." Malling gave directions to the taxi-driver, who drove them out of Julianehaab along a narrow winding road.

Godwin wished people would leave him alone long enough to think. Despite the assurances of the Bruuns, he was still not convinced that the British throne was kosher; those movies could have been faked.

Then he realized that he still carried the so-called chocolate-bar in his pants pocket. If the thing *were* a time-bomb, it might go off any minute and splatter him and Malling all over southern Greenland.

"What makes you so pale?" said

Malling solicitously. "Are you not feeling good?"

"I—I'm all right, thanks," said Godwin, tensing his jaws to keep his teeth from chattering.

He would have to get rid of the thing, but in an inconspicuous manner, and in such wise that when and if it did go off it would not kill anybody. It wouldn't do to throw it out of the cab...

They reached the Oster-Bygt and got out to look at a singularly unimpressive group of ruins: a little clump of what one had been houses of raw fieldstone, unmortared, of which now only a few stretches of thick wall remained. Wire fences surrounded them and a policeman paced back and forth.

"The settlement of the great Eric Thorvaldson," said Malling reverently. "We keep the cop there to stop American tourists from carrying the houses away as souvenirs, stone by stone."

"Let's walk down to the shore," said Godwin.

THEY CLIMBED over the rocks, hampered by being handcuffed together. When they came near the sluggish sea Godwin threw the chocolate-bar as far as he could.

At Malling's questioning look he said: "That was a piece of candy in that bag von Wittelsbach left with me; I figured it might have been poisoned too."

"You should not have thrown it away! We needed it to examine!"

"Too late now; let's go back."

As the taxi purred off on the road back towards Julianehaab, a terrific roar split the air behind them. The shock made the little automobile quiver, and the air was filled with the cries of startled gulls. Craning his neck, Godwin saw a tall geyser of water settling back into the sea a few meters off-shore.

Malling ordered the taxi-driver to turn around again and return to the parking-lot at the Oster-Bygt. He hurried down to the shore, where the uniformed policeman was already

standing, looking out to the sea. There was nothing to be seen. At last Malling returned to the cab, saying, "Maybe, Mr. Godwin, it is just as well you threw that thing away when you did!"

"Why don't you pinch Werner von Wittelsbach before he poisons or blows up somebody else?"

Malling looked unhappy. "I should like to. But it is not easy without very good proof, and we do not *know* that the candy-bar was what exploded. That young man is a—how do you say—protege of Thor Thomsen, who works closely with Herre Gram... So you see..." The detectives spread his hands helplessly.



AT THE GATES of the palace stood a pair of troopers of Greenland's microscopic armed force, wearing parade uniforms, topped by conical, cossack-style lamb-skin hats. When Malling identified himself and his fellow-passenger they snapped to present-arms with a click and a clank that made Godwin wince.

"You will get used to it," said Malling.

The taxi drove around a winding driveway between scrubby dwarf trees and stopped in front of a big field-stone house similar (except in size) to the other residences of Julianehaab.

"The palace," said Malling, getting out and paying the taxi-driver. "Oh, here comes the king!"

Godwin looked around at the crunch of tires on gravel. Three men were approaching on bicycles. The one in front, in civilian tweeds, was a man about Godwin's stature with a fringe of graying red hair around his nude scalp. He looked stocky and powerful, and the resemblance to his daughter was obvious. Behind him pedalled two more soldiers in black kalpaks,

each with a drawn saber held against his right shoulder.

Malling came to attention and took off his hat, saying; "*God Dag, Herlighed!*"

The leading cyclist braked to a stop and got off, saying; "*God Dag, Malling,*" and then to Godwin, "So this is my future son-in-law, eh?" He wrung Godwin's hand in a bone-crushing grip. "Come inside."

King Edvard III led the way to the front door and bellowed, "Ingeborg!"

When a woman appeared, the king exchanged words with her in Danish, then said to Godwin, "Your room is not quite ready yet. Come into my sitting-room."

Then he conversed briefly with Malling, who finally unfastened the hand-grip of Godwin's fetter from his hand and remained outside while the king led Godwin into a room and closed the door.

"He was afraid to leave you alone with me," said King Edvard. "As if I needed protection from *you!* Ha!"

"What ja mean, your Majesty?"

The king stuck out his jaw and thrust his face close to Godwin's, his blue eyes narrowed to slits. "I mean if it weren't for Gram's fordoemme banquet tonight, I'd tie you into knots and stamp the remains into the floor, young swine!"

The king reached out and tweaked Godwin's nose between his powerful fingers.

"Ouch!" said Godwin.

"That's just a taste. Lucky for you, I can't afford to have you turn up at the banquet with a pair of black eyes and a few broken teeth."

Godwin's temper rose in its turn. "Look here, pop, I don't care who you are; you can't push me around! If you wanna fight, I know something about that too. An actor has to learn—"

"Actor! To make it worse, he had to be an actor!"

"What's the matter with being an actor? I didn't ask you to kidnap me

up to the end of nowhere and marry me to your daughter!"

"And who asked you to seduce my poor innocent darling and drag the honor of the royal house in the mud?"

"I never did!"

"But those photographs—"

"That was just a joke—"

"Yust a yokel!" roared the king, his speech more Danish under stress. "I'll show you vat is a yoke—"

"I can prove it! Damn it, let me talk for a changel! You can take your parachron to California and set it up on the beach, and see exactly what happened! And if I didn't leave her as free as I found her, I'll not only marry the dame; I'll eat your second-best crown, jewels and all."

"So?" said the king. "That's an ill wind of another color. If we *could* take the parachron to California... But Gram would never consent."

"Why not?"

"It suits his purposes to marry you to Karen, and this gives a fine excuse. He can always say that since the rumors about those photographs have got out among the people, nobody would believe our denials even if the machine proved otherwise." The king lit a knobby pipe and blew great clouds of smoke.

"Is Gram a kind of dictator in Greenland?"

EDVARD lowered his voice to a conspiratorial level. "For practical purposes, yes. He is in a strong political position and controls the police and the guards, so the rest of us must jump to his bidding. If I could get away with it I'd—how do you say it—hop the coop too."

"You mean quit?"

"Absolutely. This monarchism is a lot of nonsense; an archaistic revival based on a temporary emotional aberration among the world's peoples. Maybe after you're safely—ah—hooked I can persuade Anker Gram to let me abdicate, and you and Karen can handle the headaches. I have no more use for Greenland now that my wife is dead.

Maybe I'll settle in your California, where it's at least warm."

Godwin lit a cigarette and said: "If you fly the coop you oughta take me along."

"Why? You caused this trouble, even if you only meant it as a joke."

"No reason. But—I don't suppose you can bribe a king, can you?"

"Not this king; I've made arrangements to be assured of an adequate income no matter where I live."

"How about a screen test?"

"A screen—you mean you could get me in the movies? Yes?" A light of eagerness showed in the king's eyes.

"I don't say I can get you a good part, but I can give you a start. I got *some* little influence."

"Now you are speaking. You promise to get me into the movies, I'll promise to try to help you escape... If you can prove what you said about you and Karen."

"I can't do that until we're in California."

"I understand; we have to trust each other a little. We shall have to try to make it in one foul swoop—you and me and the Bruuns and their machine all together. Karen, too, if she wants to come. But don't fool yourself; getting away from Anker Gram won't be so easy as falling off a tree."

There was a knock on the door, and Ingeborg announced that Mr. Godwin's room was ready. In the hall Detective Malling waited to take up his old duty. He looked relieved that nothing had happened either to the king or to his charge.

IN THE suite turned over to the future prince-consort, Godwin found a valet, one Syv, waiting to serve him. Syv had laid out a gaudy costume of the sort that Godwin would have associated with historical movies; a garb similar to a diplomatic uniform, with a high-necked coat covered with gold lace in front.

"Do I wear that?" he said.

"Yes, sir," said Syv.

By the time Godwin was regally clad, sounds without indicated that the festivities were imminent, though the sub-Arctic summer day still had several hours to go. Godwin said; "By Goldwyn, I could use a drink about now!"

"I will get vun, sir," said Syv. "Vat would you like?"

"How about a double Martini? And get one for Otto too."

Malling protested, but with little fire of conviction, and when Syv came back he let himself be persuaded to drink. Half an hour later Godwin was regaling his hearers with reminiscences, "...so the director says: 'Are you a stunt man or aren't you?' and the stunt man, he says: 'If you wanna wrassle that there octopus, you get in that there tank and wrassle him. I got a family.' So the director turns to me and says—what is it?"

It was Ingeborg with a message that his Majesty and her Highness were awaiting Mr. Godwin to accompany them in to dinner.

Feeling no pain, Claude Godwin, accompanied by a slightly weaving Malling, rose to leave. Godwin murmured; "Pull yourself together, Otto. They'd never believe you could control me if they saw you stagger."

The ill-matched pair made a reasonably smooth progress to a reception-room where they found the king and the princess milling around with early arrivals. Godwin, remembering his costume-pictures, half expected a liveried trumpeter at the door to bow a flourish and announce his name, but no such thing happened. The Greenlanders, even if they kept a king, were somewhat stingy with their pomp. Malling whispered; "Hold your left hand close to my right, Mr. Godwin, so the handcuff von't show."

"Hell with that," said Godwin. "If they're such dopes as to throw an engagement party they gotta drag the groom to with bracelets, damned if I'll help 'em out."

Godwin was introduced to various people, but as most of the talk was in Danish he could only give them glassy smiles of polite incomprehension. A servitor passed him with a tray of glasses containing a pale liquid that Godwin took for more Martinis. His first sip however showed that he had got hold of something stronger.

"Aqvavit," said Malling.

Karen was saying; "Father, how shall Mr. Godwin take me in to dinner with Mr. Malling attached to him?"

Godwin suggested: "The king could take Malling in, and I could follow right behind with you."

"Nonsense," said Edvard. "I shall take my daughter in, and since you're joined to Malling you can take him."

Karen said; "Has not this foolishness gone far enough? I am sure we could trust Mr. Godwin not to dive through the window if he were freed."

The king shrugged. "No doubt, but *he* won't agree." He nodded towards where Anker Gram was talking to the British Minister Plenipotentiary. "By the way, I don't think you know Thor Thomsen, our leading industrialist."

Godwin saw that Thor Thomsen was old and potbellied with a jowly bulldog face. The Stuart Pretender glowered gloomily over the industrialist's shoulder.

"I have had that—ah—pleasure," said Werner von Wittelsbach.

As Godwin finished his drink it occurred to him that his unknown ill-wisher might have poisoned it, but he was too well lubricated by now to care. When dinner was announced he trailed docilely in behind the king and Karen, Malling shambling beside him.

AN HOUR later, Godwin had tucked away the last of the banquet and sniffed suspiciously at a glass of yellowish liquid set before him.

"Svedish punch," explained Malling. "Used for breeding."

"For what?"

"Breeding. You know, ven we say 'skeal'."

"Oh, toasting." Godwin tried some and found it good though sweetish. Malling had already drunk half of his.

The chatter died as Gram finished his coffee and rose. He made a speech ending in "Skaal!" which Godwin took for a toast to the king. Godwin watched those around him and went through the same ritual motions. Gram made another speech with a "Skaal!" to Karen Hauch. When he did the same thing once more Godwin started to rise for the third time, but a jerk on his handcuff brought him down again. Malling hissed. "Sit down, stupid! That vas to you!"

"How should I know? He knows I don't understand Danish."

"Den you better learn, but fast."

Gram, ignoring Godwin's gaffe, went ahead to make another speech introducing somebody, who in his turn made a speech. Not being able to understand what was said gave Godwin an uncomfortable feeling of having been struck deaf, though he tried to laugh when the others did.

Two hours, five speeches, and uncounted Swedish punches later the banquet broke up. Godwin awakened Malling by jerking the handcuff, and together they wandered into the ballroom, where the king had started the record-player and was dancing with Thomsen's wife, a middle-aged dame with a battleship jaw. Through the broad windows on the north side the long Greenland sunset blazed in purple and gold. Godwin spotted Karen Hauch and dragged the now alarmingly unsteady Malling over to her, saying; "Miss Hauch, I hope some day when I'm not hitched to old Otto I can ask you for a dance."

"It is too bad," she replied. "If Mr. Malling could find a partner we could make a foursome of it..."

"You mean like a square-dance, the

kind I danced in *Blood in the Ozarks*? But it would take awful good shink—synchronization, and I don't think the guy's up to it. Matter of fact I'm not either."

Then Karen went spinning away in the arms of Werner von Wittelsbach, who gleamed triumphantly over her shoulder at Godwin. Maybe, the latter thought, the German had cherished hopes of not only acceding to the British throne, but also of becoming Karen's consort.

"Mr. Godwin." It was Sir Keith Lampson-Hart, the British minister.

"Yesh?"

"What's this rumor about your putting in a bid for the British crown, on some silly dynastic pretext?"

"Better ask Gram or the king," said Godwin. "They cooked it up, not me." He hiccupped.

"I just thought I'd say," said the diplomat, "that the British crown is conferred by the British people, you know. They make the rules of legitimacy and any time they don't like the result they can change them, you know."

"Thanks for the advice, Sir Keith." Godwin turned to Malling. "Otto, let's get outa here! If I don't get a breath of fresh air I'll pass out in front of all the bigshots of Greenland!"

He dragged the wordlessly goggling Malling through a door. Not knowing the layout of the mansion and being the worse for wear, it took him some time to find an exit...

HE FOUND himself, not quite knowing how he had come there, leaning against the fieldstone wall on the west side of the house. He was standing on moss-covered ground dotted with waist-high dwarf willows and birches. Beside him, Malling had folded into a sitting position with his back to the house, his prominent blue eyes picking up highlights from the sun set.

Godwin drew in long breaths of the cool air and felt his vision clear somewhat, though a headache threatened

to take the place of his former anesthesia. He did not know how long he stood there gazing at the sunset. In more equatorial latitudes the phenomenon would have ended long since, but in Greenland it lasted from twenty-one hundred to midnight and was immediately followed by a sunrise of equal leisureliness.

"Hey, you!" said a voice.

Godwin turned. Werner von Wittelsbach stood before him with a couple of elongated objects cradled in his arms.

"I have been looking all over for you," said the Stuart Pretender. "I thought you had run away; now, you degenerate American mongrel, we shall see who files a claim to the British throne!"

"Pardon me if I'm thick, old boy," said Godwin, "but what the hell are you talking about?"

"We will fight it out, pig-dog!"

"How the hell can I fight with Mallings tied to me?"

"We shall not fight in the barbarous American fashion, with fists, but in the cultured German manner. Take one!"

"One what?"

Von Wittelsbach thrust the large ends of the objects into Godwin's face. Godwin saw that they were the hilts of a pair of swords. Hardly knowing what he did he took one and wagged it for balance, saying: "Are you kidding?"

"On the contrary, I am most serious! Only a light-minded American would joke about the duties and honors of kingship."

"Don't be a sap. I don't want the damned kingdom; I got a career and plenty of dough already. If you wanna be king, go ahead; I'm not stopping you."

"A coward, eh? Then I shall have the pleasure of beating your backside raw with the flat. Bend over." Von Wittelsbach's voice was thick with the effects of alcohol.

"Look here," said Godwin, "I said I wasn't interested in fighting, but I won't let you push me around. I suppose you think I don't know how to handle these silly stickers, huh? You

didn't see me do Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet* a coupla years ago, didja?"

"Bend over, swine!" yelled von Wittelsbach, and he took a wild swipe at Godwin.

Godwin parried more by reflex than by intention and instantly found himself engaged. He discovered that he was holding, not a foil, epee, or other familiar hand-weapon, but a German *Schaeffer* with a big basket hilt, a long straight narrow blade, and no point but a razor-sharp edge. The purpose of the implement was not to kill an antagonist, or even to pretend to do so, but to inflict cuts on his scalp and face which would later result in a prized set of scars, and also give him a chance to show his Aryan mettle by continuing the fight without flinching even when his head was a mass of gore.

If he had been less befuddled, Godwin would perhaps have devised a way out of his predicament. After all the weapon was unfamiliar to him and the Stuart Pretender had an advantage of height and reach. Godwin could not run with the half-comatose Mallings chained to him, and he never thought of yelling for help. While he could fence well enough for cinematographic purposes, he had never expected to have to fight a real duel for blood—handicapped, moreover, by having a drunken detective chained to his wrist!



WERNER von Wittelsbach, his left arm behind his back, advanced upon Claude Godwin with wide-spread legs, swinging his *Schlaeger* at Godwin's head as if he were cutting sugar-cane. Godwin, who had learned saber-fencing for the part of the noble Confederate officer in *The Last Plantation*, had no trouble in parrying, especially as von Wittelsbach was almost as drunk as he. But crude as the methods of *Schlaeger*

fencing seemed, Godwin realized that his opponent would wear him down in time by superior strength of arm and wrist.

Godwin threw back a few strokes without effect and tried to use footwork, but was hampered by Malling. As he dragged at Malling's arm, the detective, aroused by the clang of blades, lurched to his feet.

"Hey!" cried Malling "*Nej, i Gronland bliver...* In Greenland is dat forbidden! Stop, at vunce!"

Otto Malling staggered forward, his hands groping the air, just as von Wittelsbach aimed a terrific cut at Godwin. Malling thrust his head in the way so that the long blade came down upon his skull with a short dull sound. He fell to hands and knees, blood running from a two-inch gash in his scalp, and collapsed on the moss.

As he did so, Godwin decided that this medieval farce had gone far enough. He stepped forward and kicked von Wittelsbach in his most vulnerable parts. As the German doubled over, Godwin brought the pommel of his *Schlaeger* down on his head. Werner von Wittelsbach fell across the body of the detective.

Godwin stuck the point of his saber into the ground so that the blade remained upright and bent to examine the recumbent forms. Both were alive if unconscious, and Malling's wound did not appear serious. Then Godwin examined the hand-grip of the handcuff which Malling still held.

Malling's right hand was secured to the grip by a shaped guard that passed over his knuckles. This guard was hinged at one end and latched at the other, and fitted the back of Malling's hand so closely that while it was in place there was no chance of his losing his grip accidentally. However, the latch that held the guard in the closed position was not locked, and a little manipulation enabled Godwin to open it and remove the grip from Malling's hand.

He had got this far when a suppressed feminine cry made him whirl.

There stood Karen Hauch and Karl Bruun. The latter exclaimed, "What is this? Are they dead?"

"No," Godwin explained.

Karl Bruun said, "So you are free? Good! You wish to come with us, do you not?"

"Where to?"

"My father and I are making a break for freedom, together with Karen and the king. We heard the swords and came to see..."

"Say no more; lead on!"

Karl Bruun led the way along the winding paths until he was almost out of sight of the palace. They approached a large helicopter. When they reached the machine Godwin saw that half the capacious cabin was taken up by the parachron. He said, "Taking the gadget?"

"Yes. My father has always wished—where is he?"

Karl Bruun began hunting around, but no trace of the Elder Bruun did he find.

"Bevare!" he said. "I told him not to be wandering off—"

They stood uncertainly for a few minutes. Bruun said, "I do not dare go off to hunt, because then if he returned I should be missing. As I was saying, we hope to get the machine to a country where we shall be allowed to use it for scientific purposes and not this absurd dynastic business... I hope he gets back before the police discover Malling and Wittelsbach, or learn that we took the parachron off the roof of the laboratory building."

"This the machine you herd whales in?"

"Yes. We shall not be allowed to keep it, but if it can get us to Canada that is all we ask. Ah, here he is!"

Viggo Bruun appeared, snapped: "*Jag fand ham ikke; nu skal vi gaa,*" and boosted Karen Hauch into the helicopter.

UNCOUNTED hours later Claude Godwin yawned himself awake.

Despite the excitement of escape he had fallen asleep almost as soon as they had taken off. Now he looked around, stiff from sleeping sitting and overhung from strong drink. The sun was up, but that meant little in these latitudes. His watch told him that he had been asleep something over ten hours; in fact it was about time for breakfast.

Karen was sitting by Viggo Bruun, who twiddled the dials of the radar set while Karl Bruun piloted. They were all talking Danish, but switched to English when they became aware that Godwin was awake.

Viggo Bruun said: "That should be the Naskaupi River ahead. I hope, Karl, that your inspiration of cutting inland will not land us in prison for breaking the Canadian flying-regulations."

"If we had gone straight for Gander anybody who followed us could have picked us up," said Karl Bruun.

"Speaking of which, here is a pip! Somebody is behind us," said Viggo Bruun.

In a matter of minutes Godwin, peering past the parachron through one of the rear windows, saw a speck against the piled clouds. The speck swiftly grew to an airplane which swelled and flashed by overhead with an explosive shriek and roar, and dwindled to a speck again as it banked for a long turn.

"Thomsen's machine!" cried Karl Bruun.

"That would be Wittelsbach piloting," said the elder Bruun. "Here he comes again."

The airplane, having slowed to a mere 200 k. p. h., came back. Again it skimmed overhead, barely missing the helicopter. Godwin, forgetting his aching head, flinched as it passed.

The Bruuns were excitedly talking Danish again. Karen Hauch said, "He wishes us to alight. See, he is putting down his wheels to break our rotors if we do not."

The helicopter sank towards the bleak Laborador landscape, where the

coastal tundra began to give place to forest. As the country was mostly open at this point there was no trouble in finding a landing-place. They had hardly touched their wheels to the moss when the airplane (a sportsman's version of a fast single-jet police craft, without armament) alighted too, its flaps and slots extended, and taxied up beside the helicopter. The canopy flew open and von Wittelsbach and Thomsen scrambled out. The former ran over to the helicopter, waving a pistol.

"Get out!" he shouted. "Keep the hands up!"

WHEN THE four people in the helicopter had complied, Thomsen waddled past them with a hatchet in his hand. He climbed into the helicopter, whence presently came smashing sounds.

"Hey!" cried Godwin. "He's busting up the parachron!"

Von Wittelsbach said nothing but swung his gun to cover Godwin, who glanced around, expecting to see signs of strong emotion on the faces of the Bruuns. Instead they took the destruction of their life's work impassively.

"What's this all about?" said Godwin.

Viggo Bruun said: "It is all right; there are complete plans—"

"Were," said von Wittelsbach. "We got them out of Gram's private safe-deposit box and burned them. Now shut up."

A mosquito sank its probe into Godwin's cheek, but he did not dare slap it for fear von Wittelsbach might mistake the move and shoot. The smashing sounds ceased and Thor Thomsen climbed out of the helicopter, saying, "*God. Skytte dem op.*"

The sentence sounded enough like "*Good; shoot them up,*" so that Godwin guessed the meaning, a guess confirmed when von Wittelsbach raised the pistol and aimed at Viggo Bruun.

"Hey!" yelled Godwin. "Thomsen! You can't trust that creep; he tried

to poison me when you only wanted him to take a message—”

There was a metallic sound behind him, followed by the roar of a shot. Godwin, craning his neck, saw that the door of the luggage compartment of the helicopter, below the passenger compartment, was hanging open, and that on hands and knees in the cavity with a pistol in his hand crouched Edward III, King of Greenland. When Godwin turned back, von Wittelsbach lay supine with a huge hole in his chest through which fragments of bone and lung could be distinguished amidst the general gore. Thomsen was slowly raising his hands.

“Well, well,” said the king. “So they were right when they said you had hired the man who killed that witness in the case of the Aarestrup fraud! And fearing lest the Bruuns with their machine should track down the whole story, you chased us to destroy the parachron and all the witnesses. What a bloodthirsty little man!”

[Turn To Page 126]

Though he did not know about the Aarestrup fraud, Godwin followed the general drift of the accusation. He said, “Say, your Majesty, isn’t it too bad you couldn’t have shot him before Thomsen busted the machine? Now it’s gone for good...”

“Not quite,” said Viggo Bruun. “I feared some such attempt, so I made a duplicate set of plans, addressed them to the British Government, and had Karl drop them on the deck of a British ship on one of his whale-herding flights.”

“Oh,” said King Edvard. “Then all is not lost. When I got to the helicopter I found nobody—Dr. Bruun must have gone off to search for me—so I hid in that compartment lest the police find me.”

“It is better than that,” said Viggo Bruun. “Sir Keith passed on a confidential message to me that the British had built a machine and tried it out. The first thing they discovered was that Harold Haroldson had no legitimate heirs, though plenty of the



An Unusual Feature
Novel of Other Worlds

QUEST OF THE QUEEN

by Ross Linden

Chris Lane follows a hunch his reason tells him to be romantic nonsense into a startling biological discovery, and an amazing interplanetary quest—the quest of Myrna!

leads off the
January issue
of

FUTURE
Science Fiction Stories

COMMUNICADO

By Katherine MacLean

Here is an absorbing speculation, on the borderline between fact and fiction. It isn't "true", because the evidence remains insufficient; on the other hand, we cannot be sure that it is "false", either, as yet...

WHAT DO people want when they read science-fiction? I write this as science-fiction, but what if it is the truth? We might not want to hear about the truth.

I'll tell you a story then.

But first, a question. Have you ever had a prediction dream? I've had one. It was nothing, just a filthy bit of gossip about a Hollywood star. Even in the dream I was sorry for that star that he was exposed to such talk.

And the next day I was told the gossip by a masseuse in a bus.

I'm a rational person, perhaps exceptionally rational. I know my own mind, and its interests and escapes, and when I woke up from that dream I knew it was nothing of mine. Just to be sure, I checked, sitting there on the edge of my bed for a brief interval of concentrated self-scepticism, but I could find no history of delving into movie magazines, no hidden lewd interest in the love-lives of movie stars, only a genuine concern to leave the poor bedeviled creatures alone to a bit of privacy, at least from this particle of their audience. I made a note



that this was something unexplained, to be investigated again.

And the next day, as I have said, I fell into a conversation with this hearty, well-painted woman on a long bus ride to New York, and she told

me anecdotes about having recently worked as a masseuse in Hollywood. I changed the subject uneasily, introducing the fact that I was a writer to create a diversion. The response was the usual one. Everyone seems to be a writer at heart. She immediately pulled a sheaf of poems out of her purse and set me to reading them. They were honest and sensitive, but marred by a scattering of second hand purple clichés, so obviously out of context that they could easily have been removed. I tried to point them out, but she was so distraught with maternal anxiety over her creations that I could only compliment and reassure her, and let well enough alone, for it was surprising enough that such healthy brutality as hers could have produced the degree of sensitivity the poems contained.

We were approaching the terminal, but she went back to her inside gossip from her recent work in Hollywood, and now I saw the nasty item coming with a sinking of the heart, and tried to fend it off and interrupt again; she told me, anyhow, with a certain stubbornness and urgency in the set of her broad jaw.

I suppose she had to tell me. It was written, as the Mohammedans say, for otherwise I would have had nothing to have dreamed about already, and would have been in one of those insane time-paradoxes in which the effect destroys its cause that our science-fiction writers so delight in writing.

●

THAT PART was truth, and nothing to disturb you, for most of you have had prediction dreams, even if just about the death of Aunt Ella. They are a part of living, and seem nothing to be disturbed about; for anything which so persistently connects itself with Aunt Ella must be as harmless and futile as she. Even spirit-

ualism, with its chilling implications of haunts and powers beyond life, long ago succumbed to the dusty sweet boredom of Grandma's parlor; for when the knocks are deciphered or the slate written on by the unseen is opened, it turns out to be Uncle Ben, who was a great bore in life, is now being a great bore in death, telling us he is "soo happy, soo happy" and he sounds futile and childish and soul-stunted, just as before.

So, reading Doctor Rhine's careful experiments in which he establishes the reality and universality of telepathy, you probably picture him, as I do—high-collared, bachelorish, and very bachelorish, and very like Aunt Ella.

And I read John Dunne's *Experiment With Time* in which he establishes that almost a third or more of our dreaming is random scrambled prediction, which we don't notice—because our futures are on the whole too uninteresting, and too much like our past for the difference to attract any attention on waking. To me, even his clear careful approach seems naive and childishly direct, although I couldn't say why; there is no question for me of the validity of his conclusions.

Before the delayed approach of careful science the subject of psi, telepathy, clairvoyance, ghosts, astral forms, precognition, and other such inexplicables seemed to attract only the childish and demented among us. Or perhaps it cast a blight of childishness upon those who approached it, for even the best investigators seemed to have found only their own hidden psychosis and a well of credulity. The subject traditionally has been so infected with nonsense that the very existence of psi powers came to seem an incompetent hoax.

Perhaps—Well, have you ever read Kafka's *Investigations of a Dog*?

We come to my story.

I couldn't find any of the books I had come for in the public library at Red Bank, and after searching for

something of general interest I finally drew out a book on calculus; something called *The Thinking Body* which I thought might cover the same ground in endocrinology as Cannon's *Wisdom of the Body*—which I had wanted; and a book on telepathy as my third...

Settled into an easy chair at home, I put aside the calculus with pious resolve to study it later, discovered *The Thinking Body* was a book on posture, and turned to the book on telepathy*. I opened at the back chapters and read a few paragraphs of his conclusions to see if he were a crackpot. The conclusions were fantastic, but the writer, Whately Carington, handled words with the sensitive logic of a post-semantic; the contradiction was disturbing. I read further. Some religious fanatic had scrawled exhortations to prayer all over the margins, and repeatedly underlined random words, but it did not disturb the calm of the strange and appealing conclusions.

I began at the beginning of the book and checked his experiments. They seemed valid; his conclusions seemed conservative.

Experimentally he had found that when two or more people concentrate on one idea, the transfer of a second idea from one to the others is made easier—as if, by thinking of the first and second idea together, the first person had associated them not only in his own subconscious, but in the other people's subconscious also—as if thought transference were via associative linkages through a shared subconscious. The same amount of contact as is in two schizoid "minds" sharing the same brain on a psychiatrist's couch, minds held apart from unity of thought by two strongly divergent personality patterns. This opens a possibility that our ego-selves are schizoid subgroupings in a larger mind, held apart by

the alienation of divergent body-patterns and environment.

AFTER HAVING mentioned this, Carington abandoned it, acting on the pragmatic principle of using the minimum number of ideas possible in a hypothesis.

He returned to the statement that ideas form associative linkages. Since the effect is indifferent to distance, he concluded it is an effect not traceable in brain-structure, which operates in a three-dimensional world where all affects are most definitely a function of distance. The "ideas" then are not the physical dendrite linkages we mean when we normally say the word, although they seem the same.

Assuming that they are tenacious somethings in something, groupable by personality-patterns and thought-activity—but definitely not dependent on the physical brain as a trace—he extended logic into regions of good cheer by postulating that, on the death of the brain, this other imagination-thought-memory system (so like ourselves with our eyes closed) will go on, in vivid contact with the equivalent thinking-systems of anyone, living or dead, whose thoughts happen to run in the same channels as one's own on any subject, with the ideas held in common being the bridge-points of contact. This would be a friendly association by congeniality, perhaps forming a mesh of new linkages from mind to congenial mind, which would end with absorption into a slow-growing federated mind; and this possible inclusive mind, though including very human traits from all the assorted humanity who have lived and died, could very well be called a co-evolving "God."

This was a pleasing theory to me, for if I ever had to chose among religions I would unhesitatingly have chosen the Brahmist-Transcendentalist-Mystic group as representing the

*Whately Carington, *THOUGHT TRANSFERENCE*, Creative Age Press, 1946

theory least insulting to reason, and most conducive to peace of mind.

But again the book seemed a simple-hearted performance, and incomplete. There was none of what Emerson called the "tragic sense," or a feeling of contact with a wider, more frightening reality than the comfort of a fireside at home. Englishmen write like that; one can always feel the tweed of their sleeves brushing the paper, the human warmth of the hand holding the pen, and know that supper will be ready in a few minutes. It is very real, but they live in a garden where the cat is not allowed to eat the birds, the view of the hills is walled off by a hedge, and all nature is orderly and reliable.

Should I say, then, that Whately Carington's approach was logical, but it did not go far enough to please me? It seemed to imply that there was nothing very startling beyond the safe garden-limits of its thought; and in following the trail further, all hypotheses would be equally orderly and domesticated.

What is important here is that, having constructed his comfortable club-room paradise of congenial conversation, he closed his book and left his tools lying in my mind. A challenge to seek the danger and reality I felt he had overlooked.

The semantic tool is a violin to play the sheet-music of life. You may pick up any melodic thread from the tremendously-orchestrated score and follow it, aware always that what you play is not the full truth, that a violin is not an orchestra. The magnificent pattern of the symphony is something the imagination cannot contain, but you dimly feel how much is not being played, for our bodies exist in that total symphony and are battered by it on the level of non-thought. It cannot reach our minds.

BEFORE this time I had recognized that there was danger in psi, and

ignored its challenge, prudently leaving the question to be settled by others, yet inserting the thought of it as a silent question, an alertness far down in the body on the silent levels to screen all incoming data for paranormal traces.

The question was linked to consciousness again by the reading of the book and the challenge of its incompleteness—linked too close to the place where the violin had been laid aside. How far should an analogy be followed? This was more than violins, and less, too, for anyone who knows what music can be. There was a counterpoint of logic from the pattern of the book, and a gathering feeling that the screening question had recognized enough paranormal traces to know the special taste and flavor of psi. Enough for control?

I was writing a letter and said things I know now were a last attempt to restrain myself from what I was about to do. I marshalled all the old good arguments about its danger—ideas I had used in a story years ago, presenting them as if they were new.

The fact that it is now operating far down in the subconscious, on a completely uncontrolled, non-volitional level, shows first that it is so damned easy that we can do it by accident—without the faintest idea how, or why—and without the slightest effort. It shows, secondly, that there is some very good reason why it is down there where we can't use it. Anyone who has fooled with auto-suggestion knows well that one of the easiest tricks in the book is the bringing of a low-level activity to consciousness.

The most probable reason why it is not done is *because we don't want to*. In other words, there is some good reason why; we learned the reason so fast and hard after birth that it is buried in our past, and, continuous effort to prevent psi is too deeply-learned to reach consciousness—any more than we are aware that our habitual skilled effort to balance properly as we walk is sustained and driven by a memory of the early pains of falling.

Unconsciously, then, we avoid telepathy as much as possible. However, it cannot be totally avoided; apparently a steady trickle seeps in on the lower un-

conscious-levels. This trickle is what shows in the positive results of e.s.p. experiments. In the people who score consistently wrong is psi guessing tests, those who reliably score above chance in misses—it is obvious that their minds are able to discriminate between a guess that is sheer randomness, uninfluenced by knowledge, and the trickle of psi data; subconsciously they react against even this harmless psi data of card-symbols with such fear and aversion that it is deliberately reversed and falsified before it is allowed to pass.

Why?

I come to my preliminary conclusion: It is dangerous.

There is probably little point in doing research on the subject. Psi is one of our natural faculties, so easy that it is impossible to suppress. When telepathy will be good for us, we will have it; we will have it without effort, full scale, including its effortless reach to the ends of the universe and its depth both ways in time.

Frankly I think that at this stage in our growth it would burn our brains out; I wouldn't want to fool with it myself.

I NEVER mailed that letter. I went on to more chatty subjects, then stopped and read back thoughtfully. It wasn't true; I was kidding myself. Curiosity is indifferent to caution, and the subsurface thinking which had gone on while I wrote had focused to one obvious experiment. I knew what I was going to do, and why.

The important point was that the psi powers might be held down by a pain-conditioned block. But any sort of conditioning can be voluntarily suspended by relaxing its associated muscle-set; and pain itself can be suspended in the same way.

(This trick is so well known it is even mentioned in the book on posture. The only reason it isn't practiced widely, I suppose, is that parents seem to delight in raising their children under the alternating "yes and no" conditioning—which is used in laboratories to make neurotics of experimental white mice—so that most of the population grows up half-wacked and too busy mind-muttering to learn their own internal keyboards. As soon as the culture straightens out some of its kinks, I expect they'll teach autoan-

esthesia in 2 Hygiene, along with how to brush your teeth.)

Psi was probably held down by a pain-conditioned block. A conditioned block could be suspended.

It stopped being a casual thought. I got up from the desk where I was writing the letter, and considered. I could feel subconscious alertness on the subject; the screening question had alerted and integrated that class of sensation, so that it would be accessible to control. And it would be approachable...

So I—

Maybe I shouldn't go on. There is a good commercial-type story at my elbow, waiting to be finished; what comes next will be hard to explain.

Telepathy is untemporal. "Time" means no more to it than "space." A subject receiving thoughts is just as likely to take down the ones to be sent tomorrow as the ones which were sent yesterday, or the ones given at the moment of reception. The experiments which show this are logically and mathematically watertight. This is not a matter of calling yesterday's miss a hit because it accidentally struck today's subject. The subjects are highly unlikely to be struck at random, with a known and calculated unlikelihood; they are not known or chosen in advance. The evidence is that ideas are "received" *before* they are "sent".

You may check this if you don't believe it. The fact remains that telepathy, which all possess, is a cognizance, which wavers indiscriminately into the "past" and "future", as if the present moment were difficult to locate among the others—as if the difference between past, present, and future does not exist at all.

And dreams are untemporal...

These two low-level, involuntary activities of our minds somehow wander aimlessly outside of the boundaries of "time"—without effort.

As if there *are* no boundaries...

How much of what we know is self-imposed illusion?

Standing there I looked at my watch; and while looking, I turned off all marginal thought, damping everything down to a relaxed blankness, a recording blankness, for I was going to remember this! I reached down into the psi-telepathy sector—and opened it up.

A blare of impressions came, like turning on the radio. Then it was more like *becoming* the radio, and becoming all the stations tuned into the radio. A lumpy concept.

THERE IS no time or space to the psi section of the mind. Can you visualize that? It is not a blankness: it means that the "You" diffuses to include all "time and space". It is all inside; it is you. Any moment, any place can be reached into, and touched. But the requirement of this diffusion is to think nothing, desire nothing; for thoughts are abstractive, and desire—being motive—must be local to a body. Omniscience held for a moment, and seemed natural; but some moments in time, some places in space seemed pretty rough. Suns for instance. A faint unease and an extra effort at non-reaction, as a guard against shocks, came; but the effort was a thought. Non-reaction, a thought...

Ideas held in common the bridge-points of contact...

I am seven years old, and lying on top of a bed in the beach cottage, fists propping chin, reading *Ozma of Oz*.

The unpainted wood wall before me is permeable; I could reach through it. I know that with a warm glow of magic certainty. I could reach through it if I wanted to. It would be like mist, and like crossing one's eyes inside. I glance up at the rough wood, smiling, then suddenly lean on my book and cautiously reach out, closing my eyes with concentration. Out—further—further—Nope, touched it! Didn't manage that time. I glanced around guiltily, to make sure no one

was there to see me, and go back to the story.

Another try. Simultaneously, full of determination and reluctance, I sit up in bed at night, sixteen years old. It is winter; this is the steam-heated house in Flushing that we live in winters when I go to school. Snow is falling outside.

"Give it just one try. No harm experimenting,"—words muttered inside as placation to the sneering little god of society. Sit up now; eyes closed. Pretend this is the bed at the beach. Create the sound of the surf coming dimly over the sand hills, through the walls; create the feel of wooden walls around, shingles above. The light cord will be dangling just a little forward and above. Now, reach up, and out, and grasp it—

Fear, then relief as my hand closes on air. A few more grabs, secure now and safe, knowing that it won't be there. I can't reach through "time and space," or I won't. I drop back into bed and pull the covers up.

"Coward," say the thoughts. "That was no fair test. You didn't want it. It can't be done with a divided mind, even if it is possible."

"Can I make myself want it?"

"No. Forget it. Forget it." I lie staring into the dark, willing the comfort of sleep to come.

"Try anything once," I mutter apologetically to the ugly little god of societies' judgments of such goings-ons. It sneers; I sneer back. I was an unlovely, timid, tongue-tied adolescent and that scene has an undertone of habitual misery and self-contempt which surprises me now.

I am fifteen, a year younger, and still habitually happy, sitting up suddenly in bed at the beach with a sudden frightened urge to pull the light cord, turn on the light. I grope in the air. The cord is not where my hand is groping, and my heart contracts with shock. I wave my arm slowly in big sweeps until it intersects a string at the side of the bed, where

it is this year. Next year it will be where I groped first. I pull it and the light comes on. And I look foggily around the familiar room with a vague feeling of oppression and unease. The room somehow looks unfamiliar and wrong, as if I had expected to see a different room. I reach for something to read, to dispell the feeling, but my mind is thickened with the vast stillness of recent deep sleep; the words are meaningless, so I turn the light off and wait. The adrenalin wears off; the nervousness passes; and I sleep again.

I AM ONE year old, sitting in the grass under a tree, charmed by the existence and motion of everything. I am playing a game, reaching out for a tiny farmhouse in a valley that curves away before me. I reach out very stealthily, trying to keep it small, trying to grab it before it magically retreats and grows to a large building far away. It slips away as my hand approaches and I touch only air. I put my hands in my lap and pretend to be thinking of something else, waiting for the distant things to come close and small so I can try again. I am intensely excited and interested.

Around me in "time" the linked chain of other selves began to thicken, and beyond them were other lives being lived—sunlight and storm; jungle; sand; day; night—Someone falling from a window, (not me, but it is as cold and despairing as the falling dream always is.) Someone going into a windowless grey dome under a grey sky. (Where is this?)

Episodes on the edge of sleep and death, touching the psi boundaries. A man murdered, dying, trying to speak to a friend who has come into the office and found him. It is intensely important to speak, although the message

is only a jaunty hello, and a smile— But everything is fading further away; it is like trying to call back up a tremendous distance to the dwindling figure on the office floor, the distant form bending over him—the effort of remembering how to move the distant cold lips—effort— That was probably the point of idea similarity that made the contact; for isolated from his dimming senses he reached sudden poised clarity, and stretched probes of alertness and sensitivity back over the thickening paths to the stiffening controls of his brain, *imagining* life into it with a last half-magical effort that touched the fringes of psi. He was trying to reverse "time" a little, and climb back up closer to the light and sound.

There was the experiment of being a man marooned out of his own civilization, trying to raise the one in which he found himself, and being attacked by a mob for his advanced opinions. I had already passed through a snatch of that in a dream long ago. It is not often that I am given a chance to absorb the feel of a character so fully human and so totally unlike myself. At the time, without bothering to ask where or when, I had noted him down as a character for exploitation in a story. The story lies at my elbow now, having bounced at all markets, and is in the process of being rewritten. There is not much left of the original... A shy, withdrawing man with a touch of self-hatred when he was disliked, he reacted with an uncharacteristic flash of resentment and some sudden random blows before they got him. Driving the blows was his sobbing bafflement at the uselessness of their murder, and, and a desire to be understood, to break through into their minds somehow and force logic on them. It reached such a burning intensity that the mood held after I had awakened from the dream-contact with it two years ago, and was hard to forget.

There was the experience of being a prematurely stuffy British Civil Servant trying to smuggle himself across a border near Pakistan, enjoying the adventure, but feeling somewhat put upon because this was not in the normal line of duty.

THERE WERE others. Each life was as real as any life; each had its memories and sureness of self. Sunlight; storm; winter; jungle—every instant was separate and vivid on a knife-edge of "time". An older self flashed through and was gone. A detached psychologist somewhere in the future, for a moment wondered about the nature of reality, and thoughtfully touched the time stream. As in all the others, the bridge-point of contact was the effort of mental stillness; a sense of near danger; controlled relaxation; and a voluntary or involuntary calling on the psi powers. But her spontaneous experiment was another and closer thought-linkage. Her mind was so much wider than mine that she could include it without a ripple; for a moment she did, then casually withdrew from contact again and went on to other thoughts.

There was too much that was interesting in that contact. The inward silence broke; irresistibly a whisper of thought came. Thought. Each image in its chain of images became a bridge, and a link to the interior of a hundred other minds, each of them not stilled at the point of contact, but thinking. Thoughts. A tidal wave rose and swept in. Recording stopped. Each life was as real as any life; each had its own memories and sureness of self. The thread of identity was gone.

Centuries and generations, and behind them a vast shuttle weaving a pattern. These impressions are so nebulous that they might have been

imagined, for it did not record. There is a blank in the memory, with only some dim intimations of experiment. Stop the wheel. Hold one idea one identity. It was an experiment with a touch of danger; an inexperienced fumbling for controls; a concentration on stillness. It was suddenly like another experiment far away. *The psi experiment of K.M.*

It flashed through vividly with some ideas and a touch of sensation, and I grabbed the mood and hung on, letting it pull me into the twenty-fifth year and the moment of the experiment.

Suddenly I was standing looking at a wristwatch on my arm. The wrist and hand looked oddly familiar, a distant echo of something I had known long ago. My senses grasped at the familiarity as though taking anchorage, rapidly assimilating to the memories of the moment before, until there was nothing else.

STILL hanging on to that one idea (psi-experiment... psi-experiment...) I stood watching my wrist watch with careful fixity, urging it on to the next minute (experiment... experiment) until its ticking carried me past the point of contact.

While I waited, carefully not thinking, the protective wall of the inhibition against psi built up again to full strength. Psi was blocked off again.

The blocking mechanism went on to screen out all recent memories that could have led back to the point of contact, reclassified them as imagination-section of the mind where daytime logic does not tread, and only the safe, free non-reacting self of sleep can go.

"Neat trick," thought I, letting the make-believe go on its conclusion. And I considered the quick forgetting of dreams. Natural, or expedient? Everything was fine, plenty of good defense-mechanisms.

I sat down behind my desk again, then noticed something. My knees were weak, and I felt sick and shaken.

Why? How much had I just forgotten?

I explored back delicately. Something must have happened on the moment of entrance—when the recording began again for shock to have reached my physical self. I could find nothing; there was only the traces of unrecognized shock, and a persistently returning memory of a scene in Lovecraft's *Shadow Out Of Time*. It was the point the man scrambles up a labyrinth of underground corridors towards the surface, trying desperately for silence, terrified that the doors lining the walls of the corridors might open as he passes and the "nameless" emerge. A typical Lovecraft nightmare... I did not see the meaning of the clue, but I can guess at it now as I write.

Psi is repressed for some reason. Fears and worries and traumas and irrationality are repressed because of what they are; that puts them in an area very close to psi.

The ultimate horror for almost any person would be the sudden consciousness of the forgotten, repressed things in the dungeons of his own subconscious. They might be minor things in the cold light of reason, some of them (a child's misdeed; a fear that the house will fall, or burn; or that a snake will come from under the bed), but all have been forcibly forgotten, locked away in the dark, away from the light of logic and reason and maturity "forgotten"; left to swell and fester and join one another in monstrous growth.

As they grow, so grows the terror-driven strength of silent denial that holds shut the rusty iron door of their prison. The content of the subconscious, if approached rationally, might be harmless; but the terror which bars the door is not.

The peculiar power of psi is that

it reenforces with other minds the thinking of any concept, and brings forth an endless array of experiences in other lives to make real the image of any happening that may be imagined.

Consider, then, PSI linked even for an instant to the part of the mind where is hidden images of horror, fear, humiliation, guilt, madness.

Terror-driven flight up the long labyrinth corridors past the barred and rusty door that hold back the "nameless." "Nameless" because to think their name is to release them. To reach the top again might have involved forgotten failures and horror; to reach sanity again might have been a triumph of *unthinking*, forgetting, denying, below lying a hell boundless and subtle.

Did this happen? I don't know. To think of this explanation from a simple shock reaction and a persistent thought of a scene from *Shadow Out Of Time* is like reconstructing a battle with a dragon from finding a single screen scale clutched in my hand.

But I would advise the next experimenter to try it with euphoria drugs to keep the thought-trails away from fear.

It might work. It might not. But experiments will continue. I won't see the end of it. But I believe that some day the race will grow up enough to handle psi naturally, and learn to wander in the kingdom of no-boundaries.

●

This story is untrue, of course. And my typewriter has jammed again. I'm afraid I'll have to take it apart. I'll be up all night finishing that commercial piece.

●

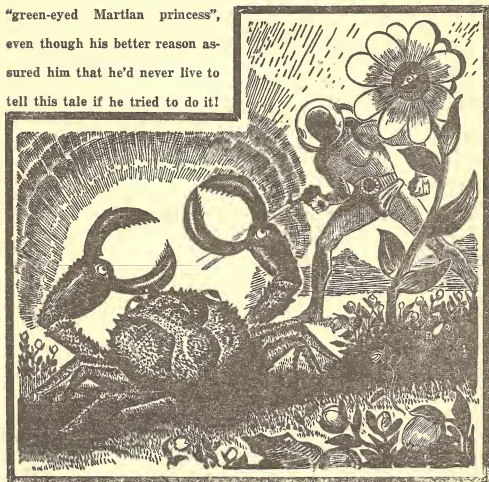
Go on; read the next story. Find out how Bat O'Hara rescued the green-eyed Martian princess.

●

It was far from romantic, being stuck in the desert of Syrtis, a hundred miles from his ship, and with only a three-day supply of oxygen. But B. Atwood O'hara couldn't resist the temptation to go to the assistance of this "green-eyed Martian princess", even though his better reason assured him that he'd never live to tell this tale if he tried to do it!

ORDEAL ON SYRTIS

By MILTON LESSER



Setting the little rocketship all aquiver, coughing their staccato defiance to the multiple moonlets of Saturn's outer ring, the jets of the Saturn Streak carried Bat O'hara ever deeper into the jaws of grim peril.

Would Bat fight his way through the great expanse of the rings in time to save his betrothed? Could he do that, alone, without outside help, as no man had ever done before?

Pops McGee lit his pipe specula-

It has been noted that the competent explorer doesn't have "adventures", in the romantic sense, simply because the business of survival in "alien" surroundings rarely allows for them. And if and when Mars is explored, it won't be a "thrilling" affair in the fictional sense of the word....

Yet, the men who go there will probably have just enough of the romantic in them to yearn for the Mars of Burroughs, Kline, and other fantastic-fiction oldtimers. And it isn't unlikely that they may amuse themselves with bang-up stories of derring-do to ease monotony. They'll be exploration and pirate stories, naturally—after all, where are Western stories read most avidly? In the West, of course!

tively, leaned back in obvious comfort against a cushioned bulkhead. Outside, the wind of Mars knifed shrilly through the thin atmosphere, but for the moment no one paid it any heed. Pops McGee chuckled triumphantly. "Get yourself out of *that* jam, Bat m'boy!"

B. Atwood O'hara eased his lanky frame down into a chair. "The trouble with you, Pops," he said, "is that you're a frustrated pulp writer. You oughta be back on Earth writing serials for the magazines, instead of here on Mars with our second expedition."

Everyone laughed, except Pops. Instead, he snorted. "Hah! Excuses, that's what. We got nothing to do till morning, so we decide to tell stories. I start one; you're supposed to finish it. Bat O'hara, you're chicken."

"Ain't that," Bat defended. "I just haven't got an imagination like yours, Pops. Tell you what I'll do, though. Would you settle for something that really happened? Would you settle for a story of our first expedition to Mars, three years ago? Don't forget, there was only Ted and me then—and we didn't have all these comforts, no sir!"

"Well—" McGee began doubtfully.

"Well, nothing! That's what you're gonna hear."

"But who wants to hear about this drab lifeless slab of a planet?"

"What?" Bat demanded. "Drab and lifeless? You got a lot to learn, Pops; maybe you'll see in the morning. Meanwhile, before we get back to your wild-eyed story about the rings of Saturn, I'll relate some history. Like the time, three years ago, I rescued a green-eyed Martian princess from the hordes of evil insect-life trying to kill her..."

Pops McGee coughed on a mouthful of smoke, tamped his pipe out angrily. "Is that so? You say *I* got an imagination. No one's ever been to Saturn, so we can't be sure what we'll find. But you go shooting your mouth off about green-eyed Martian princesses. Bah!"

"It's the truth," Bat insisted, winking broadly at the other three crew members. "Three years ago, Ted and I set our ship down on one of the dried-out sea-bottoms. Let me tell you, we got goose-pimples all over. First men on Mars! Anyway, you know what those sea-bottoms are like—great big tundras of salt and minerals, sort of a dark, slate-gray color. Ted and I, we knew we wouldn't find much there, so when morning came I took the scout ship up and headed out for Syrtis Major, about a hundred miles from the sea-bottom. Syrtis Major, that's one of those dark areas which gets bigger in summer, smaller in winter. From Earth it looked like life, and I wanted to find out.

"Now, between the sea-bottom and

Syrtis there's a narrow strip of rust desert, and that sort of gets the geography straight. I headed straight out for Syrtis, and everything went fine till I had some engine trouble. *Kabunk!* I was lucky to get out of the crash alive. The scoutship was a mess and the radio was broken, and there I was, down in the middle of Syrtis, a hundred miles from the ship and Ted. It looked bad..."

"I don't hear nothing about green-eyed princesses," Pops McGee challenged.

"Just let me finish. Like I said, it looked bad—"

●

O'HARA LISTED the items carefully. Three canteens of water, five pounds of dried meat, food-concentrate tablets. A gun? Well, he didn't know what he'd need it for, but he tucked the pistol in his belt. And the walkie-talkie, of course. He'd go crazy if he didn't have Ted to talk to.

Now he heard Ted's voice, faintly, over the radio. "Bat? Bat, can you hear me? I still say I ought to rocket up after you."

O'hara cut the walkie-talkie over to sending, said: "No! The answer is still 'no'. Look: we have just enough fuel to get back to Earth when we're ready to leave; you come after me, and we'll never make it."

"Well, I won't go back home without you."

"I'll make it," O'hara laughed. "Hell, a little exercise never did anyone harm. See you in a few days, Ted, after I get to know the Martian geography a little better."

His voice, O'hara hoped, sounded cheerful. There was no sense in worrying Ted, but O'hara was anything but cheerful. He strapped a couple of oxygen cylinders to his back, but even in the light gravity he could feel their oppressive weight. He secured the mask snugly over his head, checked the fuel lines, buttoned his mackinaw.

Noon on Mars, here in the south temperate zone. And summer. If it had been winter, he knew his chances would have been zero; even now, a cold wind cut in through his mackinaw. He didn't want to think of what would happen after the sun set. He carried a heater with him, a little portable stove which might be of some help. He hoped he could make it from Syrtis to the sea-bottom in three days. He did not think he could, and fear toyed with the edges of his brain, for his two oxygen-cylinders would last exactly that long.

Grimly, he stalked away from the scoutship. Once he looked back, saw the twisted ruin resting on its side, saw behind it the furrow he'd plowed through the rusty sand coming down. A feeling of resentment welled up from deep inside of him. It wasn't fair; it was as far from fair as anything could get. You come forty-million miles through space and no one's ever done that before. You bring your ship down on the dead-sea bottom and you feel a little like a god and a little like a usurper. Then you eat a good breakfast, look out at the cold dry winds of Mars, and take the scout-rocket up.

But Fate laughs at you—or the ghosts of long-dead Martians, if there ever were any long-dead Martians. A clogged fuel-line, a transitor twisted out of place, something like that. What's the difference? Result—a forced landing, a wrecked ship, and all Mars for your casket in three days. *If* you lasted that long.

Suddenly he heard the walkie-talkie click over, heard Ted's voice. "Hey, cut that out!"

Huh? Cut it out? Cut what out? Then O'hara smiled; he must have been thinking out loud. Not ten minutes after he started out across Syrtis, and already he was talking to himself.

"Listen," Ted's voice merged with the static, "if you want to talk, all right, okay. But nothing like that, or you'll go off your rocker before the

sun sets. Why don't you tell me what you see?"

O'hara said, "It's flat, Ted. I've never seen anything so flat. Oh, maybe driving through eastern Georgia back home, but it doesn't give the same impression. Here it's flat to the horizon in all directions, and you can tell it will be flat beyond the horizon, too. The sky is very bright, and pale blue; you can hardly look at the sun. And—I'll be damned! Ted! Ted—"

"What is it?"

"Life! They were right back on Earth; they said we'd find life here in Syrtis. There's a lot of sand around, rusty stuff, and the wind picks it up and blows it in little eddies. But there's rock, too, buried in the sand. And small green things, clusters of them clinging to the rock. Tiny flowers, too. Ted, did you ever see green flowers? Wait a minute, that's odd! They're all facing in one direction. Not facing the sun, but all looking east someplace. Ted—I see something!"

Hardly aware of it, he was running now. Idly, he stopped to pick up handfuls of the scrubby green stuff. It had a vaguely fleshy feel, like seaweed. But there was something off in the distance, and that something was not flat. Tall and graceful, it stood silhouetted against the sky, waving back and forth in the wind like an inverted pendulum.

"SO WHAT?" said Pops McGee. I still don't hear nothing about no princess."

O'hara grinned. "I'm coming to that. Anyway, how would you like to be stuck out on the Syrtis, a hundred miles from your ship, with oxygen for only three days?"

"Well, I'll tell you this, son; I'd hightail it back to the sea-bottom just as fast as my legs could take me."

"I didn't. Like I told you, there was this green-eyed Martian princess

I had to rescue. And it paid off, Pops; because later on she saved my life out of gratitude..."

It could be nothing but a flower, O'hara knew. Atop a slender ten-foot stem, it was whipped back and forth by the Martian winds. Broad yellow petals formed a perfect circle, but the pulpy center was green, green deep and bright as the sea. A lot like a Blackeyed Susan, O'hara thought, although much larger. And the eye was green; the scrubby plant-life clinging to the rocks stared up solemnly at that green eye, watching, waiting.

"What do you mean, stared up?" Ted's voice was puzzled.

"Well, that's the impression I get. Oh, I don't mean they're *looking*, not consciously looking. But every little flower is facing that one big flower, like they're all waiting for something to happen. You'd have to see it to understand, Ted; it's eerie."

"Fine. That's real interesting. But instead of gawking at it like that, why don't you start coming back here? Your oxygen won't last forever—"

"I will. I will! I just want to see—wait a minute!"

"What's happening?"

But O'hara did not bother to answer. Overhead, something had happened to the big yellow flower. Not to the flower itself, but to the pulpy center, to the eye. It pulsed, once and then once again—flashing a brighter green. The stem twisted, slowly at first and then faster, giving the eye a full three hundred and sixty degree sweep as it swung back and forth. And all the while it waxed and waned, setting the air aglow with a bright green radiance.

O'hara heard something, soft and far away. So soft that it could have been the wind or his imagination—a keening wail. Shriller than the wind?

It grew louder, a plaintive crying

sound. It rang in his ears, subduing everything else. He wanted to run and hide from it, or perhaps he wanted to stoop down and bury his head in the sand. He did neither; fascinated, he watched.

The scubby green flowers clinging to the rock responded to that sound!

Their tiny petals folded in upon themselves. Nothing but the pulpy undersides remained exposed, and somehow O'hara got the impression of a turtle withdrawing into its shell. Of a thousand-thousand turtles.

IT TOOK him a while to realize that the sound came from the tall green-eyed flower. It was swaying and pulsing—and wailing. A loud wail, loud enough to be carried for miles on the wind. Loud enough to make every little rock-flower bury its head in a fleshy covering. But that was impossible, and even as the thought came, O'hara dismissed it. Things followed each other—cause and effect; that was the way the world worked, and what else could he assume? The tall flower wailed, and the others, the smaller rockbound plants, heard. Hearing, they obeyed, withdrew, turned themselves inside out almost.

Why?

Something stirred behind him; something scraped and clattered across the surface of the rock.

O'hara whirled around to face the new sound—and got the surprise of his life. Mars had native flora; he'd seen that already. But Mars harbored animal life, too. Animal? Well, the things moved, dragging themselves ponderously across the rock for all their small size.

Twenty of them, he counted, each about a foot across. More like crabs than anything else he could think of on Earth, with bright red armor-plate, half a dozen armor-sheathed legs, three-jointed, and three big claws out front. On each claw, he saw the merest suggestion of a slitted eye, protected from the wind-driven sands

by ridges of armor. The claws were not used for locomotion, no; they probed about over the rock, grasping again when nothing happened.

O'hara felt his allegiance drawn compulsively to the tiny plants. They seemed helpless, so utterly helpless. And yet, as he observed more carefully, nothing happened. Turned inside out, the plants seemed immune from attack. The pint-sized monsters could probe at them and squeeze, but they failed to penetrate. Had the guardian plant's signal been for that?

Evidently, the red-armored things thought so, for they crawled away aimlessly for a time, then came back and surrounded the tall stem, reaching up with their claws and snipping at it. One of the strictest rules of the expedition, of course, said that the men were not to touch any native life, particularly fauna if any be found. It made good sense, too: the human body would offer absolutely no resistance to an even mildly virulent alien poison.

Still, O'hara knew he couldn't stand there and watch the armored monsters slowly tear down their enemy. He could not explain the feeling and he didn't try. Dimly in the back of his mind was the thought that, had he not stopped, he might be a mile or more away from this spot and hence that much closer to safety.

HE HEARD Ted over the walkie-talkie, realized that the voice had been droning in his ears for several minutes. "Calling—calling—damn it, Bat, what happened? Where are you?"

And his answer, certainly a ridiculous one: "Keep your shirt on! I can't leave until I do something. Won't take a minute—I hope..."

The armored things had pulled the stem half way to the ground, and grouped about it, heaped one atop the other, they continued tugging. Above them, the yellow flower began to shake itself.

It shook and shook—and something tumbled out. O'hara didn't know what, but it might have been a spore. Another followed, and another. The spores settled to the ground slowly, some of them falling on the red armored domes.

The crab-like things began to scurry away! Some of them did not make it, rolling over, their legs beating feebly at the thin atmosphere for a time. And then they succumbed. But others came, and the plant could not drop its spores fast enough.

O'hara took out his revolver and fired at the mass of red armor. His bullet shattered one of the creatures, maybe two. But the shot roared flatly in the thin atmosphere, and when it stopped, so did the wailing. The gun's roar had destroyed whatever mechanism produced the sound, and O'hara saw the effects at once.

Slowly, the rock-bound flowers opened, exposed themselves. Red domes were everywhere, little legs scurrying beneath them. The crabs began to feed. The tall flower shook itself furiously now, scattering spores in all directions. But none of them reached far enough, and the crabs continued their feast.

"What a prize fool I am!" O'hara mumbled. "I try to help those plants and I bring on their downfall instead—"

"I still don't get it," Pops McGee persisted. "All this stuff about plants and crabs and little spores, what's it got to do with a green-eyed Martian Princess and how you rescued her? Not to mention how she saved your life. Though why any green-eyed Martian Princess would save *your* life beats hell out of me!"

"Well, why don't you let me finish? You know, people always talk about born explorers; they seem to have an instinct for it. They kind of know exactly what they have to do, and at the right time. Sometimes it looks

like a mighty stupid thing, but they do it anyway, and it pays off. Me, I hadn't done so good along those lines. I fired a shot to help that big plant, and it looked like I'd done the reverse. But then, well, then I had one of those explorer's impulses they talk about. No, I won't try to explain it..."

O'hara ran forward, shook the tall stem. Spores tumbled down all about him, clinging to his mackinaw. Briefly, he tried to brush them away, found that they had imbedded themselves so firmly in the fabric that he couldn't get them out. He shrugged, picked up a handful and ran back to where the crabs were making their feast. Somehow, he realized the spores did not stick to the smooth leather of his gloves, but only to the coarse wool of the mackinaw.

He came among the red creatures, sprinkled them with the tiny spores. It didn't take long; it hardly took any time at all. One by one the crabs perished. Some of them tried to get away, but O'hara could take great bounding leaps in the light gravity, and he pursued them with his handful of spores until not a one was left alive.

A score of spores still clinging to his mackinaw, he turned and stalked away. For a moment he stopped to look at the tall plant which seemed to regard him intently out of its solemn green eye. The eye pulsed, flashed brighter.

A wink? O'hara snorted, cut out across the sparse vegetation of Syrtis and toward the waiting strip of rust desert and the dry sea-bottom beyond it.

"Don't tell me that's the end of your story?"

"Nope. More like the beginning, I guess. I still had to get from Syrtis

to the sea, but as I walked I did a lot of figuring. On Earth there's nothing like that big plant. Maybe it's something like radar, but whatever it is, the flower can somehow learn when those crabs are coming. It beams out this warning and all the little plants hide away safely. And those spores were its own protection, only then I didn't know just what the spores could do.

"Anyway, like I said, I had to get from Syrtis to the sea, and I only had three days. Then—no more oxygen. Oh, there's oxygen here in the atmosphere of Mars, but it's so thin that it doesn't do any good. It was a pretty grim thought as I walked along, let me tell you. That first day, I made it to the edge of Syrtis. As you'll see after we're here a while, there's not much twilight on Mars. I stopped just when the sun was going down, and by the time I had my stove going, it was dark. There's one thing about night on Mars, Pops; you should see the stars. Because the atmosphere's thin, they don't look much like the stars of Earth. And the Milky Way—man! The Milky Way looked like a shining bridge of snow flakes.

"But I didn't have much time to admire it. I could only try to keep out the numbling cold..."



He arched his frozen body around the tiny stove, curling up, he realized with a smile, almost in the fetal position. For a while it helped, but he found that the heat did not penetrate to his back. He ate two strips of the dried meat, hammered a chunk of ice out of his canteen and let it thaw in his mouth. Soon he was beating his frozen hands together, but they were as stiff as twin slabs of wood, and they hurt.

"Ted!" he called into the radio, hardly able to control his chattering teeth as he spoke. "Ted, I don't know what to do. The stove doesn't

help much, and I've got to use oxygen from one of the tanks to keep it going. If I shut it off, I'll freeze—"

"How do you feel?"

"That's a good question! Lousy."

"No, I don't mean that. Maybe if you kept right on walking, maybe if you went without sleep altogether, you'd get here... No, the hell with that! I'm going up to get you."

O'hara shook his head savagely, called back: "No! That's out! You'd lose take-off fuel if you did that."

"I can't let you die—"

"Let me see what I can do about that. Not you! If someone doesn't come back alive from this expedition, it might be a long time before the government sends another one. But I'll see if I can do what you said. I'll keep right on going—"

IT WAS a mistake. Numb and stiff, he got to his feet. He picked up the stove, tried to unscrew the oxygen feed-line with his frozen fingers. Half through it, he dropped the stove and the cylinder of oxygen came loose of its own accord. It fell to the sand and he jumped down after it; fumbling with the feed-line. He couldn't close it!

He was all thumbs—frozen thumbs. He heard the oxygen hissing out, and he saw something ludicrous in his futile attempts to shut the valve. He began to laugh. He chuckled softly at first, but soon the laughter welled up from his throat in great choking sobs.

I'm dead, he thought. I'm as good as dead because I have about half an oxygen tank left. I wonder what it's like to suffocate slowly...

He sat down in the sand and let the dry, powdery stuff run through his gloved fingers. It should have been frozen solid, but with hardly any moisture on Mars, things didn't freeze that way. At first, he thought he'd sit there without moving and let the cold get him first. That would be quicker, less painful, a cleaner way to die. But he clambered to hands and

knees, stumbled, somehow got to his feet. The dry cold winds whipped against the exposed parts of his face, and he could feel his parched, frozen skin beginning to crack and flake off. He wouldn't make a pretty corpse, he decided.

The wind alone seemed his ally. The wind was behind him, and it prodded him on with quick frozen gusts. Aside from that, Mars was an enemy. Cold, implacable—and for that he was afraid. Nothing physical confronted him. Nothing told him to stand up and fight, for there was nothing with which to battle. No, he could merely plod forward, and before long he would die.

"That does it!" Pops McGee chortled.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, for a time I thought all this really happened, just like you was telling it. But you're here now, right?"

"Uh-huh."

"And you only had half an oxy-tank left, right?"

"Uh-huh."

"With about seventy miles to go, huh? Bah—that's the wildest story of them all! You'd a smothered less than half way!"

O'hara smiled. "That's what I thought, too. But I couldn't just cash in my chips without a fight, I guess, so I kept on walking. I walked all through that night, and when morning came I was pretty surprised, for I hadn't frozen to death. Only trouble was, the oxygen tank registered almost empty. Let me tell you, Pops, that's one lousy feeling! The sun came up fast; the sun warmed me; I sat down and I ate something and I almost felt good. But I knew that by noon I wouldn't have any air left.

"After a little while I found myself playing with the revolver. Squeeze the trigger once, quick, and it would all be over... I must have

felt disgusted with myself; I hurled that revolver away, as far as I could throw it, and on Mars that can be a pretty long way. Then I started to walk..."

HE LOST all track of time. Later in the morning, he took a slow sip from his second canteen, as if he still had to measure out his water carefully. Things began to warm up fast: it might have been close to fifty degrees Fahrenheit by noon.

And then the oxygen tank hissed on emptiness.

He felt it deep down in his lungs first—a sick, empty feeling which spread. He felt it there and hoped it would stay there, but soon it left his chest and traveled out to his throat and to all the muscles of his body. Yes, he thought vaguely, he'd make quite a corpse, flat on his back on the Martian sands, the bright plaid mackinaw shining in the sun, the strange plant spores dotting it with green...

The lack of air brought hysteria. Not knowing why, he began to unbutton his mackinaw. He soon thought better of it, closed the coat tightly around him. He toyed with the oxygen mask, with the useless mask which hid his face from the sun. He tore the mask from his face, hurled it away, breathed deeply of the thin Martian atmosphere which did not harbor sufficient oxygen to keep him alive.

McGee was breathless now. "I'll admit it, Bat; you tell a good story. The whole thing's impossible, of course—but what happened then?"

"Well, it was tough going, because the day was dry and the night was cold. But I got back to the ship early the following morning, and—"

"Darn it, I knew you'd wind up with something like that! You got

[Turn To Page 124]



INTERVENTION

BY MICHAEL SHERMAN

HE CAME into the room, and age was written on his face, bitterness in the curving droop of his mouth, defeat in the slumping of his shoulders. I saw him, and knew that the uneasiness I had felt since the report first came, telling of Joschim's ship entering our city lock, was well grounded. I glanced out the window, peering deep beyond the atmosphere-shell of our city, into space-blackness, almost as if I expected to see the planet we approached loom suddenly before us. It would not appear thus; I knew that. Our approach to planetary bodies was gradual, and this world would show first as a speck in the distance, barely distinguishable from the lights of other bodies. It would become visible and grow, little by little, taking shape slowly.

I turned to Joschim and let his aura play upon my open senses, for no impression must be lost, no matter how painful. His feelings were as much a part of his report as the words he used, and any evidence he brought with him.

"Did you find her?" I asked him. He nodded and took a seat. "I found her, Antrim ser Dalla."

"Is she...mad?"

His shoulders lifted slightly, then fell. "Yes, she is mad; but on that world, it may not matter so much."

"Why not?"

"On that world, ser Dalla, they are all as mad as Jeanne Kalaris."

I looked around the walls of the directory office and saw that the council screens were all lit, now. In each section, the images of a household ser or lir glowed; in some, younger members of a household were also in evidence, for this was an open report, and any citizen could hear and be heard.

"Jeanne lir Kalaris," I told him softly. "There is no senior in her household."

He looked up. "And I, Antrim—am I now Joschim ser Hoffmann?"

I opened my thoughts to him, and let memories through; there are times when the polite concealment of words is neither kindness nor wisdom. He learned, thus, of his father's last

- To the people of the City, Jeanne was a sick frightened
- child, who needed help. But on this planet, where she
- had fled for refuge, Jeanne was a political genius.
- But did her presence there constitute intervention?
-

sols; knew that his brother remained with a research-team on the last planet our roving city encountered before entering this system; found that Anna Valdes-lir-Geyer awaited his return, and had entered into no long-term alliances since his departure.

"What of her madness, then?" came Valdes-lir-Geyer's voice, and I could see from her face that she was shocked at Joschim's appearance. The two spoke mentally for an instant, and while none of us knew what they told each other, we could feel the auras of pain, sympathy, and guilt-feeling from ser Hoffmann.

I shot a question to Joschim's biopsych, then, asking if he recommended a postponement of the report. There was another brief silence while Wandel ser Tung conversed with Joschim, then the biopsych said, "I have recommended that this report be verbal."

I turned to ser Hoffmann. "Do you accept?"

He nodded, and mental murmurings filled the room for a moment. Except for details known only to ser Tung, the case of Jeanne lir Kalaris was known to all. Born when her parents were spacewrecked on a small asteroid, she had been the only survivor when a scoutship from our city finally reached the little world. Her elder brother, who had been with the rescue party, had taken her with him on a mining expedition; he sent her back to the city shortly after, when she showed signs of deep-rooted guilt and anxiety. Her response to biopsych treatment had been slow, and it was during a brief alliance with ser Hoffmann that she had fled the city in a small cruiser, which she immediately put into cosmo-drive.

Since she could not have had much, if any, experience with navigation, the odds were against Jeanne's finding her way back, even if she wanted to return. We knew that the cruiser was well-equipped, but control center showed that the cosmo-drive unit had shut off automatically after a few seconds, and had not been turned on again. But even a few seconds travel

in the n-continuum (about which we know nothing except that it is outside our own space-time continuum, and that the cosmo-drive will send an object into this continuum, then bring it out where the unit is cut off) equals innumerable sols of distance travelled at the highest speeds obtainable in our own space-time continuum. Jeanne had fled, fled blindly, for quite obviously she had no idea where she was going or where she wanted to go.

Joschim followed her. It was a free choice on his part; he was in no way responsible for the decision Jeanne made. But he felt that he had some part in the situation which resulted in her flight; and wanted to help her if she would accept his aid.

That was twenty sols ago; now, ser Hoffmann was back, looking as if he had lived two hundred sols without rejuvenation, lived that duration under terrible strain.

"Tell of us this world Jeanne found," I said to him.

"It is a society where the vital energies are dammed up, repressed, distorted," he replied, "so they express themselves in fear and endless struggle for power over one's fellow beings. Most succumb, one way or another, and are helpless before others who develop strong personal drives. But leaders can only drive their followers and themselves toward death when love is forbidden, or distorted into dominance. There are many states, each devoted to the same ideal: total control or destruction of the others."

"What of science, art, philosophy?" someone asked.

"None is totally lacking," he said. "Science is nearly all devoted to techniques of destruction; where it is not, the results are adapted to the struggle for power. Art and philosophy exist on a very limited level, since both are subordinated to the main ends—the exceptions show that some individual's life-forces have not been entirely submerged or distorted, but they exist virtually as self-contained units; they do not function with society, but alongside it. Their works are frequent-

ly derived from life-feeling, but these are exploited to confirm with the prevailing drive; what cannot be fitted or twisted in is ignored."

"Jeanne lir Kalaris is one of them, now?" ser Tung asked.

"More than that," Joschim replied, as his shoulders sagged. "She leads them!"

●

HE WONDERED, now, if he had been right in following Jeanne—if, at least, he shouldn't have returned once he satisfied himself that she had reached this planet safely. It was not only that he missed the roving city, but that the strain was beginning to tell on him; Joschim could see himself thinking and feeling more and more like those around him.

It's my duty to be sure she wants to stay here, he thought, and knew, even as he thought this, that the sols he'd spent in this environment had done their work on him. He had no such duty; this was not a necessary job to be done. He felt a compulsion to do it, and he was succumbing in order to avoid the anxiety of not doing it.

I'm sick, he thought, *sick as any of them. Why don't I get out and go back home for treatment?* He knew the answer to that, too; in his present state mere knowing was useless, academic information which could not, by itself, change anything. To give a thing a name, to stick a label on it, does not amount to being able to cope with it—even though the people of this world thought so.

A woman entered the room, and he was astonished. Jeanne had been provocative enough from the very first, but now Joschim saw this as an aspect of her sickness. He had seen many others like her here; it was no longer something to take him by surprise.

I thought it was mutual desire, he thought; *it seemed so natural.*

But here, in the culture of this planet—all the many states had the same

basic culture, despite innumerable differences in language, custom, ideology, etc.—it was plain enough. Jeanne feared love, even while she sought it, and her terror was greater than the desire. The way she dressed, the way she moved, the way she spoke—all suppleness and liteness; her garments too tight, too sheer; her eyes inviting; her voice low, seductive—offered everything, but gave little. She would submit at times, but give and feel nothing.

Except the desire for power; that blazed out like a searchlight.

She held out her hand and said, "Mr. Martell—" She broke off, as her eyes widened. "Why—you're—Joschim!"

He felt tears behind his eyes, and his throat was choking up. But he had repressed tears too often; there were few who could weep in this world, and the act was regarded as somehow degrading—only natural for infants, who must be trained to restrain themselves. He smiled, instead. "So you know me, Jeanne? I scarcely know myself these days."

"But—how did you get here?"

He lifted his shoulders, and let them fall. "A long story. I followed you; got in here pretending to be an amnesiac, thus accounting for my lack of knowledge on the one hand, and learning to pass for a native in the process of being 'cured.'" He shuddered. "I pity the sick here; all the cures are worse than the diseases—outside of simple first aid."

She stroked his hand. "Poor Joschim, I, too, was sick—but all the therapists here are not incompetent. You must have been taken to one of the approved state hospitals."

"The approval was overwhelming."

"You must let me help you," she said. "I tried several kinds of treatment before I found one which cleared me."

He tried to imagine what the standards of health might be which could pronounce Jeanne healthy, and sighed in resignation. It didn't matter, he sup-

posed. *She's satisfied with her condition*, he thought; *that releases me from any obligation*. He looked around the over-luxurious living-quarters distastefully.

"Joschim," she whispered, "dear Joschim. You came through all this to help me, didn't you?" It wasn't a question.

He nodded. "I didn't know why you had run away; I thought it might have been my fault."

"I couldn't stand it there; that terrible flying city frightened me. I would have died! . . . I'll never go back, Joschim—never. No one can make me!"

"No one will try," he said. "You should know that, Jeanne. You didn't have to run away; you could have gone any time you wished to, and we would have given you any assistance you wanted."

He arose. "I followed you just to make sure you'd be all right, Jeanne. You like it here; you're accepted as one of these people; you're allied with a high officer, and you're doing what you feel is necessary work. We won't interfere; we won't even offer an opinion on it."

She caught his hand. "Don't go, Joschim. I—I need you."

He shook his head. "There's nothing I can do now. I am not of this world, even by adoption; I want no part of it."

"But I still love you, Joschim. Wait—hear me out."

There was power in this woman, vital power, distorted as it might be, and he could feel the surge of it. He looked at her now, and suddenly he was seeing, not what his mind told him she was, but what memory threw up to him from the past. He saw only a frightened, appealing girl.

She's sick, and I'm sick. There is no joy here for either of us. I've been repressed too long. . .

"You still love me, Joschim; I can see that you do. Don't deny our love."

She was in his arms, then. "I need you, Joschim. More than just your

love. There will be war very soon unless we can stop it—you can stop it, Joschim. Are you so superior to us that you can sit back and watch while millions are slaughtered? Is that what the great culture of your flying city means—abandoning people to doom?"

Her mouth pressed against his, compulsively, before he could reply.

THERE WAS silence for a few moments as ser Hoffmann paused in his report, then Anna Valdes-lir-Geyer was the first to speak. "Jeanne has become a citizen of this other world, so she doesn't necessarily involve our city; but that is clearly an evasion of the facts. Since she came from us, she brings them various aspects of us—distorted as they may be—and it seems to me that her very presence there amounts to intervention."

She opened her thoughts, then, so we could feel her emotions—tangled with personal affection for ser Hoffmann—and make allowance for this bias in her stated opinion.

"It should be remembered," said Wandel ser Tung, "that Jeanne lir Kalaris is something of a special case, apart from others who may adopt other civilizations—I say 'other civilizations', because finding this world of human beings suggests that there may be still others, similarly sprung from our common ancestors. She has had very little of our environment; her parents died when she was quite young, and the manner of their death—as well as the fact of it—was a severe shock to her. She lived alone for many sols, before she encountered other humans; and her time spent in the city was brief. We do not know *how much* of our culture she has actually absorbed; we do not know whether her parents were well from the time of her conception, up to the time of their death. Thus, we cannot tell whether she is capable of intervention in the sense we mean it when we try to apply our standards to her case."

I addressed Aysha Iir Bwana, "Let's look over the record on our non-intervention policy; what it has meant in the past may not be valid for the present."

"The past can never be completely valid for the present instance, ser Dalla," she replied. "In a few cases, we have decided that the similarities of a given instance were so much more significant than the differences, that we merely followed a former decision. But in most cases, we find that the differences far outweigh the similarities, and important modifications have to be made for the new situation."

"Our non-intervention policy has simply meant that we do not interfere in the affairs of other cultures, irrespective of our opinions of them. We will give whatever help we can, when it is asked, or when a natural catastrophe cannot be averted without it. We avoid any actions or 'assistance' which would amount to trying to impose our own standards upon any other culture, and we pay especial attention to technological information—it must not be above or outside of a given culture's range at the given instant."

I turned to Joschim, trying to read behind the aura he presented, look beyond the literal meaning of the words he used, note the significance of what he didn't say. "Ser Hoffmann," I said slowly, "what you have told us, so far, does not seem to account for the feeling with which you have charged it. You have suffered on the level of your own personality and relationships but there is more than that. You should not feel guilty in the way you do...or is this merely part of the trauma?"

Joschim ran his fingers through his hair, and his lips moved soundlessly for a moment. "There is more, ser Dalla. I have interfered."

in the walls, which, when activated, would permit those within to see any part or all of the outside; darkness in the almost-inaudible hum of instruments, which would scramble any photographic or audio spying-devices; darkness in the detector-screen, which transmitted any sounds or images throughout the apartment, and from key positions leading to it—anything the watchers felt should be sent on.

They were the nucleus of the conspiracy. Cardiff, Jeanne's ally, arrived first. A large man, heavy-gaited, heavy-faced, yet pleasant enough. He walked in somewhat stiffly, his shoulders hunched, hands clenching into fists. Jeanne lifted her lips to him as he entered, brought him over to Hoffmann and said, simply: "This is Leon Martell; he is one of us." Cardiff took Hoffmann's hand, his grip surprisingly strong for one who was running to fat, and was pale from lack of sunlight. He did not question Hoffmann, or object to his presence; he slumped into a chair and drank morosely until the others came. Jeanne repeated the introduction, and each glanced at Cardiff, who nodded. That was all; Hoffmann-Martell had been accepted.

Now he could feel the drive of this woman, observe the impact her personality had upon others of this world. Cardiff was the titular head, but Jeanne was the real power; they seemed to know this, without realizing it.

She wants power. Yet, there have been instances when power, after finally achieved, has been used wisely. He remembered the old histories of the dim mother world, the accounts of men and women who had swum to supremacy in blood; then, once their position secure, they ruled as ably as anyone could have in the era. *If she wants power for a consolidating and constructive goal, then she may be a better choice than the others; if she wants it for its own sake, she will be the worst choice.* Between the two extremes were administrators who merely sailed with the tides of event,

THE ROOM had a feeling of darkness for all the lighting; darkness

some ably, some disastrously, some helplessly swept along.

It's an era of contention; war is constantly possible, but not always inevitable; able direction can keep the contention on other levels.

"It is near time," someone said.

Cardiff nodded. "We need a little more crucial information. We could strike now, could have struck at any time within the past two weeks. But it would have meant violence, and possibly civil war, however brief. We've seen what has happened when a group operates on the proposition that the end justifies the means."

"At times, it does," said Jeanne.

"But only at times," continued Cardiff. "And we have to concentrate on the means, because they condition the end. Peace cannot be obtained through making war; in itself, war negates the end. The administration thinks that a quick victory—which may be possible, though I doubt it—will finish things; they claim that the last war failed to result in lasting peace, simply because we handled the situation badly afterwards."

"Well, that's true enough," another man said; "we were far more destructive than necessary to begin with, and we tried to impose our own standards upon the enemy without consideration of what they needed for peaceful life on their own terms—I mean on the terms of the majority who would have preferred not to have war in the first place."

Jeanne gave a little gesture of annoyance. "When two people are fighting, how can you tell which blow is necessary and which isn't?"

"That is the whole point," replied Cardiff. "The means was that of violence and it distorted everything. No one could be sure at the time, even allowing for panic or bad judgment or outright malice on the part of the leaders. When two people are fighting, there is no time to consider which blows are necessary and which are not; when you get into a position where it's either kill or be killed, all

your attention has to be concentrated simply on not getting killed yourself—anything you do seems right at the moment, providing it works well enough so that you're alive and reasonably whole afterwards."

Jeanne looked thoughtful. "The less resentment and disorder at the start, the easier it will be to make our way when we're in. A little bloodshed might be justified by the results; but if it is possible to win without any, we will have the strongest possible position. People will believe we mean what we say when we promise peace—we can stress the 'bloodless revolution' in our propaganda."

"That is it, precisely," Cardiff said. "We must continue delaying tactics in the council, without apparent opposition to the administration, until the time comes. We must have *precise* information on the movements of the key members and on their immediate plans, so that, when we strike we'll have them all at once, without violence. Then we go ahead with the plan; they call for a vote of confidence, and lose."

Hoffmann looked about curiously. "Forgive me for asking what sounds like an elementary question, but how do you propose to keep the administration from counter-efforts against you?"

Cardiff seemed puzzled at the question, until Jeanne explained Hoffmann-Martell's background, briefly. "Mr. Martell is in an excellent position to obtain information we could not; I cannot explain further right now." She smiled, then, added: "I am taking full responsibility for him."

He could feel the aura of her power again, an almost-tangible presence beating against the others. They sat silently, then Cardiff asked, "Has Martell been—conditioned?"

Jeanne nodded.

●
THAT SEEMED to relieve the momentary tension. "The key figures

in both civil and military administration are conditioned, too, Martell, to protect our system of government. In the case of civil leaders, they are incapable of over-riding majority decisions of the council, or concentrating personal power over and above the scope of their office. The military is conditioned against interfering with civil affairs—unless civil leaders call upon them—or starting hostilities with an enemy on their own initiative.

"We've used the term 'violence' a little loosely. 'Violence' doesn't necessarily mean personal violence in this frame; it can also refer to forcing the council to call for a referendum of the entire population; legally, we have the right to arrest them and demand a referendum, and we would have certain pro-tem powers during the debate and the plebescite. But this procedure, particularly during a time of near-hysteria, could very easily lead into actual violence, political assassination, and civil war; too many things could go wrong. They would resist violent revolt, and if there was time to call in the military, we'd have civil war for sure; the military might intervene, even if not called, if any of a large number of very likely contingencies arose.

"No, what our plan calls for is abducting the key men and conditioning them to accept an immediate vote of confidence; there are no grounds for their acceding should we introduce a motion into a council meeting, under present conditions. They would simply rule it out of order, and be perfectly within their legal rights."

There was a little more discussion, then the meeting broke up, and the others left. Cardiff, too, excused himself; when they had gone, Hoffmann turned to Jeanne. "Very well, I have some idea of what you plan to do—but I don't see why you need me."

"Gilbert is getting tiresome," she said, "but I'll have to go along with him. I suppose he'll become suspicious of you after a while; you'd better stay

until he comes back—that will make it look better."

"You haven't answered my question, Jeanne—why does this conspiracy need me? What is this information that I can obtain better than anyone else?"

"Oh, all right, if you must talk business this very moment. First of all—the others who were here: are they all loyal?"

He looked at her in utter amazement. "What a question you ask me! How would I be supposed to know? I just met them for the first time tonight."

She tossed her head in an irritated gesture. "Don't fence with me, Joschim. You could tell if they were not; you would feel something about them that didn't jibe with what they said, and the feelings they showed on the surface. Oh, I know your abilities; you, and a lot of others in the flying city. You can tell when a person is putting on a front."

"I can tell that you do not love this man Cardiff," he said. "But you do not seem to be pretending that you do, either, and he knows it. Why do you keep up this false alliance with him, when you do not love him?"

Jeanne shrugged and lit a cigarette. "In this world, Joschim, a man often enters into an alliance with a woman, or a woman with a man, simply because it is useful. I do not dislike Gilbert, and our relationship has not been unpleasant."

"But he is in love with you."

"Which is his misfortune, not mine. We understand each other, I'm sure."

"Now who is fencing, Jeanne?"

"Oh, you're impossible, Joschim. Why must you torment me like this? . . . Very well, then, since we must be precise and accurate Gilbert does *not* understand me. There, is that better, darling? He knew I wasn't in love with him when we took up our alliance, but he hopes he can win me; perhaps he thinks he *has* won me—or that I feel a gradual increase of

affection." She broke off suddenly and covered her face. "Oh Joschim, Joschim, don't question me like this; I can't stand it."

Suddenly, she was wracked with sobs; she threw herself on the coach, and Hoffmann again received the impression of the frightened child.

This is a trick; she's playing on my emotions, just as she plays on his and the others. But... I must find out what she wants. He went over and sat down beside her, his hands comforting her.

"All right, Jeanne; I'm sorry if this has upset you. You are right, of course; I would have sensed it if any one of them had been disloyal. Is that what you need from me—this sort of psychic check-up?"

"We *must* be careful," she murmured; "Gilbert will be coming back soon.... Yes, this and one other thing. You can explore the minds of the key men we have to deal with; that is very important. There is information we cannot get any other way, in time."

He got up, strode about the room. "I can't do that, Jeanne. First of all, it's extremely difficult to get into the minds of anyone on this world—even when they're willing. Their minds are locked against themselves, for one thing. And, even if it were easy, I couldn't do it."

She arose, too, her face somehow brighter with the tears; she came up to him, close, and lifted her face to him. "This is different, Joschim; we want to stop a war; you know we do—don't you?"

Hoffmann nodded. "Yes—I know that you do. You, too, Jeanne. You have ambitions of your own—I can sense that—but you are not pretending about this thing."

"I want to have the power, Joschim—the power to stop war. Look into me—am I lying?"

He raised it, now, his voice dropping to whisper. "And I forgot one thing, when I looked into her as she asked. A simple thing, perhaps a thing that only a sick person would forget. I had lived in this environment, now, for nearly five sols and it never occurred to me how much of their orientation had become mine.

"I forgot that a person may not be lying, and still may not be telling the facts. When one lies, one may be giving out information that is false to the facts, or distorted information, or dangerously incomplete information—assuming that 'telling the truth' amounts to as accurate a report of the facts as is possible. There was no intent to deceive me, now, with Jeanne; she let me see her desire for power—which I had already sensed—and looking into her I saw that her feelings and words and actions were all well coordinated; so I assumed she was telling the 'truth'. I believed her, and did as she asked."

Aysha Iir Bwana asked what Hoffmann had found in the minds of the administration leaders.

"Fear," Hoffmann said. "Driving terror; not only fear that they had worked themselves into from their own propaganda about their neighboring states, but deep-rooted fear which made them seek out enemies constantly. There was little conscious deceit in them, either—outside of petty matters, which would have made little difference otherwise. It was not difficult to condition them to accept the demand for a vote of confidence which they knew they would lose; they dreaded their responsibilities, and were happy to be rid of them—so long as they could save their pitiful dignity in the process."

"And what of the war?" I asked.

"Cardiff became nominal ruler of the state, although Jeanne was the leader, in fact. The neighboring state was in a position where it would risk war, but did not want war at the moment; Cardiff's policy worked as the

SER HOFFMANN'S head was bowed, and we all waited silently.

conspirators had hoped—It continued the contention on other levels."

"It seems to me, then," I put in, "that your intervention was not reprehensible, Joschim. Under the circumstances, Jeanne could do little harm—she had to be conditioned, did she not?"

He shook his head. "Jeanne was not considered a member of the council, even though her influence on Cardiff was known. It was assumed that his conditioning would be protection enough—after all, regardless of what Jeanne, or anyone else, urged upon him, he alone could make the decisions.

"Well, theoretically, they were right; but they didn't consider how much was not covered by conditioning..."

EVEN NOW, Cardiff could not keep his eyes off Jeanne. She was as compelling as ever, dressed as revealingly. When Cardiff was present, the flame in her seem to envelop him, still offering everything...

He must know, Hoffmann thought; and yet, perhaps he doesn't; perhaps he'll never let himself know.

"Oh, it isn't important," Jeanne said hastily; "besides, we shouldn't discuss affairs of state all the time. Martell was just about to leave when you came—you can stay, can't you, Gilbert?"

He shook his head, heavily. "I'd hoped to, but our personal matters will have to wait, my dear. It won't be long, now." He turned to Hoffmann. "Martell, I'd appreciate it if you'd fill in for me, somewhat; Jeanne must be rather lonely these days, and you two seem to get along."

A light-button in the wall indicated a tele-call on the private screen. Jeanne excused herself. Cardiff looked after her, then smiled wanly. "I'm sure that she is seldom very lonely when I'm not around, but I'd rather see her playing with you than with some others."

"Isn't that a rather dangerous concession?"

Cardiff shrugged. "What isn't dangerous around that woman? Think I'm worried about her falling in love with you, eh? Even if she does, it won't last too long; Jeanne wants the top man—that's why I was able to take her away from the general; she was convinced that I'd get farther, and she was right—so I know that no matter how she may stray, now and then, she won't wander too far. She'll come back to me, Martell. Oh, I'm a fool not to get rid of her, I suppose; but when she's with me, she gives me something I want more than power."

He thinks he knows, thought Hoffmann.

"No, I'm not worried about discreet indiscretions, Martell. I can't pick her friends for Jeanne, so I just wanted to let you know that I don't particularly mind about what goes on between her and you. Know why? Because there's one thing that I'm sure of about you, Martell—you're not ambitious. That's what I have to worry about."

He broke off as they heard the door close down the hall, and Jeanne's footsteps sounded. "What do you think about this business Jeanne was mentioning? It sounds rather far-fetched to me."

She came in, purring. "Of course, darling. That is your one fault; you haven't very much imagination. Oh, you've enough to foresee any number of likely things that would never occur to me, but it is the unlikely possibility which often actually happens. Like Leon's coming to us just at the moment we needed him. And something like what I've been telling you would only have to happen once."

"Why hasn't it happened already?"

"I've admitted it was unlikely, Gilbert. But—don't you see, my dear—a statesman has to be prepared for the *unlikely* emergency. Once this is provided for, then we can all forget about it until and unless such a contingency arises. I'll grant you that it

most probably won't happen; but if it should, and during your term of office, then you will be ready to deal with it."

Cardiff nodded. "Perhaps we ought to have an official plotter," he said, smiling. "Someone whose entire duty is to dream up the most fantastic devices for overthrowing the government imaginable, then figuring out counter-measures, and arranging for them to be handy."

Jeanne pouted. "You're laughing at me."

"From what I have seen here," Hoffmann put in, "I'd say that your thought isn't a bad one at all, Cardiff."

"Well, what do you think of this one of Jeanne's?"

It probably has happened, and will continue to happen, without their suspecting it, he thought. "I would say it's possible, and less unlikely than you imagine. A member-elect goes to a state therapist for conditioning. The conditioning is not strictly a mechanical process, but the result of a relationship between the therapist and the patient, even though mechanical devices are used. Many people have unconscious hostilities toward each other, a fundamental antagonism which operates at first sight, at times without either party being aware of it."

Cardiff shook his head. "I doubt it—that is, I doubt a competent therapist wouldn't be able to spot the patient's hostility and work within it."

"There's a difference between knowing it is there, and knowing the depth, the degree, and the shape of it. In such a brief treatment as the conditioning actually is, the therapist could be deceived; as Jeanne suggests, the results only have to be serious once."

"And," Martell persisted, "you believe it is really possible that such a thing could negate the conditioning, or sidetrack it into something dangerous?"

Hoffmann spread his hands. "It's all speculation, Cardiff. But assuming that such a thing could happen, I think

it would be more likely to happen under the present set-up, than were the person to be conditioned by a therapist he trusted and liked."

"So you think conditioning shouldn't be handled by the state therapists?"

"Not exactly that, darling," Jeanne put in. "I don't suggest that the laws be changed completely—but why not just add a slight amendment, a provision that the member *may* choose his personal therapist if he wishes to."

"I see. And, in most cases, the very fact that the member is free not to use the state therapist will make him feel better about going through the usual routine. Good psychology." Cardiff got up. "Well, my dear, you've made your contribution to the state for tonight; I must be going."

"I'll walk you down," said Hoffmann. "I'd like a bit of fresh air."

"But you'll come back, won't you?" Jeanne put in.

Cardiff smiled heavily. "He'll be back."

The two of them were silent in the elevator. They stepped out into the night, and Cardiff looked up at the sky. "Clear," he said. "You want to warn me about this proposal, don't you?"

Hoffmann nodded. "I'll admit, I do not see where she is leading to, but she must have something in mind. Jeanne doesn't toss out idle fancies without some purpose."

"I think I know her purpose, Martell. And I don't think she's ready to push a really important one—important to her own ambitions—yet. She's throwing out little things—unimportant, or just slightly useful—to give an impression of being valuable. She wants me to feel I need her, you know—need her help in case I get annoyed over her infidelities at any time. Well, I can play cat and mouse, too. Good-night, Martell."

●
NOW THE picture was growing clearer to us, little things falling

into place, one by one, as ser Hoffmann told us of Cardiff's death in an aircraft accident, and of Jeanne's election to his position in the council. General elections took place each year, although a vote of confidence could be called at any time; in the event of mid-term vacancies, the council could elect one of their own number to fill in, and elect a citizen to replace the stepped-up member—or elect a citizen to move directly into the vacant position. Jeanne was chosen as chief of state, without delay.

"She made an appointment with the state therapist for her conditioning," ser Hoffmann continued, "then withdrew after an interview, and put the matter up to the council. Since the modification of the law was her suggestion, she told them, she felt that they should determine whether she, herself, ought to take advantage of it; she brought in her personal therapist, and the state therapist who had interviewed her, to testify. It was all done so straightforwardly that the council suspected nothing; they approved Jeanne's preference.

"I determined to intervene once more—to examine Jeanne myself, against her will if necessary; we were to see each other that night. But, some time in the afternoon, I became suddenly ill, and the physician sent me directly to a hospital. I do not know exactly what happened, but I do know that—apparently through accident—I came to myself one day and found that I had been in the hospital for nearly a full sol. It was clear that I had been kept under some sort of drugs, or hypnotism; I lost no time in exploring the minds of the attendants and found that I was under treatment by Jeanne's personal therapist—and that Jeanne herself had been a frequent visitor, often spending many hours talking with me alone. Of this I remembered nothing, but the next time she visited me...

"I learned that, during this sol, a technicians' team had developed a primitive version of our own power transmitter, then adapted it into a

weapon. Later, the members of the team disappeared, and all their data had been confiscated; it was clear to me what was going on. Jeanne, and Jeanne only knew the full details of the construction; she could let others make the parts, and assemble them herself—a simple enough procedure when one knows how—and put the coating on the tubes, the final, vital step without which the transmitter is merely an interesting toy.

"There is little more to tell, except that I managed to escape, make my way to my ship, and come back. But I do know this—they could not have developed the power transmitter without my information—and Jeanne is the only one who can make it. It is obvious that she, and she alone will operate it."

There was no need for a long discussion, after we had heard ser Hoffmann's story. This was an unusual case, one where a devastating war and a terrible weapon could be traced to one individual; we questioned ser Hoffmann but little farther, enough to make sure that the Cardiff policy of peaceful contention was still the apparent policy of the state. It was clear that Jeanne planned to strike alone, herself, and present the state with a fait accompli. Once they were committed to war, they would follow through—but if the commitment were not made, war might not ensue for some time.

The vote was unanimous; we had intervened, but it was possible to undo what damage had been done by removing Jeanne, and destroying the transmitter.

We were close to the planet now, would pass by very soon. The locator-chart following Jeanne's personal vibration-pattern indicated the quadrant of the planet we must pass over to find her. We would be able to spot her exact position when we were close enough.

Joschim ser Hoffmann checked his

maps, then turned to me. "She is in an uninhabited section of wastelands, bordering on the Free State—that is her strongest rival."

"We'll have her on our screens shortly," I said.

"What if the energy beam strikes her, ser Dalla?"

I shook my head. "Harmless," I assured him. "It will be terrifying, perhaps—more of a shock, and fireworks display than anything else. She'll feel a trace of heat, of course. But a very low level will be sufficient to burn the coating off the tubes in the transmitter; once that is done, the mechanism will be useless, and quite unintelligible to their technicians. The coating on those tubes, simple as it is to us, requires a level of molecular comprehension necessary to understand the cosmo-drive—something which is far beyond them."

A communication-light blinked, then the voice of Wandel ser Tung came through. "I've landed safely near the base of the mountain range. The air is very clear, and I can make out a figure in the distance."

The vision screen narrowed down, and we could see Jeanne distinctly now. She wore the oxygen helmet and belt necessary for protection when one used a portable transmitter.

"Look," breathed Joschim. "Look at her costume. Even when she's alone, doing technical work, she has to be as provocative as possible."

I could see what he meant. The only necessary part of Jeanne's array was her belt and the helmet with small purifying tubes on her back, below. Since the transmitter sent out carbon dioxide as a by-product, an air-purifier was vitally necessary. One tube brought air into her helmet, purified, while the other drained out stale air. The heavy belt she wore would attract any possible leakage from the transmitter—there is always some in the portable models—and the large red crystal in the belt would absorb and shield it.

But Jeanne was garbed in brilliant red, a head-covering that accentuated

the seductive lines of her face and the fullness of her mouth; thin red gloves; a tight shirt, with an elongated opening in the chest exposing part of her bosom, and trousers which clung closely. The microphone wire was looped around her wrist, which told us that Hoffmann had been more than right in assuming that Jeanne, and Jeanne alone, would operate the transmitter—it was attuned to respond only to her voice.

The communication-light blinked again. "I am proceeding toward her, slowly," said ser Tung.

I nodded to the image of ser Nolte in the beam tower. "Fire as soon as you have the transmitter centered."

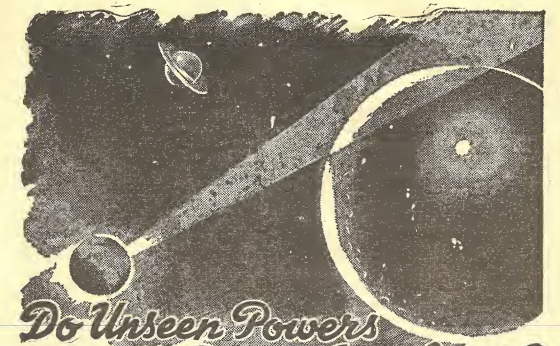
"In a moment, ser Dalla."

For an instant, there was silence as we watched Jeanne setting dials on the transmitter; then we saw the pale yellow of the energy beam touch her back. She straightened up suddenly, stiffening, as coruscations played around her; her mouth opened as she turned and looked up, saw the city in a soundless scream. Then she slumped softly beside the transmitter, and the beam played upon the mechanism. We watched, stepped up the image on our screen, and saw smoke trickling out.

It was finished as quickly as that; they would find the mechanism now, and doubtlessly suspect it was some sort of weapon, but without the tube-coating, the transmitter would be meaningless. I realized, too, that Jeanne had just turned it on, low-power. Now that the coating had burned off the tubes, the machine would burn out all its delicate parts—there would be nothing but fused metal by the time its batteries were exhausted.

We watched ser Tung's scout cruiser drift slowly along, then land by the red figure on the ground. Ser Tung looked up and waved to us as our city disappeared from his sight, over the horizon, then lifted the girl's figure gently and carried it into the ship.

I turned to ser Hoffmann. "So it



Do Unseen Powers Direct Our Lives?

ARE the tales of strange human powers false? Can the mysterious feats performed by the mystics of the Orient be explained away as only illusions? Is there an intangible bond with the universe beyond which draws mankind on? Does a mighty Cosmic intelligence from the reaches of space ebb and flow through the deep recesses of the mind, forming a river of wisdom which can carry men and women to the heights of personal achievement?

Have You Had These Experiences?

..... that unmistakable feeling that you have taken the wrong course of action, that you have violated some inner, unexpressed, better judgment. The sudden realization that the silent whisperings of self are cautioning you to keep your own counsel—not to speak words on the tip of your tongue in the presence of another. That something which pushes you forward when you hesitate, or restrains you when you are apt to make a wrong move.

These urges are the subtle influence which when understood and directed has made thousands of men and women masters of their lives. There IS a source of intelligence within you as natural as your senses of sight and hearing, and

more dependable, which you are NOT using now! Challenge this statement! Dare the Rosicrucians to reveal the functions of this Cosmic mind and its great possibilities to you.

Let This Free Book Explain

Take this infinite power into your partnership. You can use it in a rational and practical way without interference with your religious beliefs or personal affairs. The Rosicrucians, a worldwide philosophical movement, invite you to use the coupon below, now, today, and obtain a free copy of the fascinating book, "The Mastery of Life," which explains further.

USE THIS COUPON

Scribe D. S. G.

The Rosicrucians, AMORC, San Jose, California.

I am sincerely interested in knowing more about this unseen, vital power which can be used in acquiring the fullness and happiness of life. Please send me, without cost, the book, "The Mastery of Life," which tells how to receive this information.

Name.....

Address.....

The ROSICRUCIANS
(AMORC)

(The Rosicrucians are NOT a religious organization.)

Read the AMAZING
**NOSTRADAMUS
 PREDICTIONS**
 that have startled the
ENTIRE WORLD!

WHAT IS THIS WORLD COMING TO?

This—the ONLY existing edition of the authentic words of famous NOSTRADAMUS—will give you more than 1000 prophecies dating to the year 3757 A.D. Interpreted in plain, easy-to-understand language by the famed Henry C. Roberts.

Nostradamus predictions have never been disproved! Here in one Big revealing volume you will find the famous and complete predictions of the GREAT NOSTRADAMUS. Past events have come true with uncanny accuracy. Now see what may be in store for us in the future. Clothbound — over 350 Pages.

ONLY \$3.00. ORDER YOUR COPY
 NOW—BE AMAZED.

NOSTRADAMUS Inc. 380 Canal St., Dept. 42 New York, N. Y.

PAST EVENTS

ACCURATELY PRE-
 DICATED including
 dates: French Revo-
 lution, London
 Fire, American
 Revolution,
 Abraham Lin-
 coln, F.D.R.

Just a few events from Nostradamus
 Predictions: **ATOMIC WARFARE,**
RETURN OF HITLER, WAR WITH
RUSSIA, Date of Next World War,
Cataclysmic Destruction of Great
Cities, TIME OF PEACE ON
EARTH.



ends, Joschim. We've undone the worst, and—who knows?—perhaps Jeanne and you helped them a little despite yourselves. Who do you think will take her place in the council?"

"Most likely Cardiff's brother, if he's still alive. I do not know how many people Jeanne had secretly murdered, but I do know that she maintained all the outward aspects of the peace policy; it is possible that her successor will be able to pick up from where Cardiff left off."

The communication light from Wandel ser Tung's ship blinked again. Joschim leaned forward and spoke into the communicator. "Is she all right?"

The biopsych's voice was subdued, and there were tones of sadness in it. "She's dead, ser Hoffman."

"But...but," stammered Joschim, "I thought the energy beam was harmless at that frequency."

I sprang up. "It must have been, ser Tung. It couldn't have hurt her; had the beam been powerful enough

to kill a person, it would have started to melt down the transmitter immediately; we would have seen it!"

"I didn't say the energy beam killed her, ser Dalla," came the biopsych's voice. "It was fear that killed her—fear, shock, guilt, rage—all the pent-up emotions ser Hoffmann found on this world. It stopped her heart."

"Then," I said, "she can be revived."

"I think so. I've injected her with stasis solution. There is no need for haste in reviving her."

I turned to Joschim. "What do you think, ser Hoffman? Would you let Jeanne *Mr Kalaris* die?"

He smiled bitterly. "Ask me when I'm well, Antrim ser Dalla. I've spent twenty sols on a mad world, thinking of little but Jeanne *Mr Kalaris*. She's dead, now, so let's concentrate on the living; as Wandel says—if she can be revived, she can be revived at any time. Let ser Tung decide it—and I hope the decision isn't made in my time!"

IT SAYS HERE

Letters From Our
Readers and Editorial
comment

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Have you noticed that, in general, the less blatant of the sort of people Mr. McKinley discussed in his letter talk less about how "superior" they are, than about how "inferior" other people are? Come to think of it, I don't mean "less blatant"; I mean those with a thicker veneer of civilization.

And about the "God ordained it so" defense: the Afrikaaners actually use this; they derive their restriction of skilled jobs to paleskins from the "hewers of wood and drawers of water" passage in *Genesis*.

So you take a collection of books filling over a thousand double-column pages, parts of which were written at different times by persons of widely-varying opinions. You take this mixture of history, tribal legends, tribal lays written in all of the nine and sixty ways (every single one of which is right, as Kipling tells us), love poetry, sermons, collections of aphorisms, novels, biographies, parochial letters, etc., all factually accurate in wildly-varying degrees, and declare that all of it is absolutely and literally true, and the final authority on all subjects—and you'll find that you can prove anything by it.

(I find, in looking over the list above, that I've omitted "collected statutes". The only explanation which occurs to me is that I find this the most unpleasant part of the Bible, not even excepting *Ezekiel* 4, and therefore tend to forget it.)

The Liddell story would have been incomparably the best you have published so far, if the last issue had not featured "Second Dawn". "The Belt" had an interesting idea, but it was straitjacketed in a tired plot. I suspect that fiction is the proper place for Lamarckianism, although Brown-Sequard's experiments (or rather, their results) seem inexplicable except on the basis of the transmission of acquired characteristics. (I am speaking of the epilepsy experiments, not those on amputations—which, as Brown-Sequard himself pointed out, are easily explicable when one considers the mutilating propensities of the dams and the lack of close observation.)

[Turn Page]



TOOTHACHE?

For Quick Relief
Ask your Druggist for

DENT'S

TOOTH GUM
TOOTH PASTE
PAINKILLER



AMAZING NOVELS

NOT FOR THE SQUEAMISH by D. S. Monseret... 25¢
tling out of this world stories—over 25,000 words!... 25¢
THE GARDEN OF FEAR by Robt. Howard... 5 complete fantasy & science fiction adventures... 25¢
GRIFFIN BOOKLET No. 1 Two hair raising novelettes of other worlds!... 25¢
THE FLYING YORKSHIREMAN by K. Knight—Ten extraordinary fantastic yarns, 285 pages (cloth)... ONLY \$1.00... 50¢
ALL FOUR COMPLETE NOVELS ONLY \$1.00
Write TODAY for our FREE illustrated catalogs of science-fiction—Fantastic Adventure—Weird Booklet
READERS SERVICE BOOK CLUB
119 E. San Fernando St. (Dept. D-2) San Jose 13, Calif.



ILLUSTRATED COMIC BOOKLETS

THE KIND MEN LIKE
THE GIRLS USE IT TOO!!
(VEST POCKET SIZE)
They are loaded with rare cartoons. Full of Fun and Humor.
20 DIFFERENT booklets sent for \$1 in sealed wrapper. No C.O.D.
BULCO, Dept. 105 Box 382-K, G.P.O., N.Y.C. 1

WIN AT POKER

Poker system guaranteed to make you a winner 18 out of 20 times if followed conscientiously or I'll gladly refund your buck. Send name and address and \$1.00 to:

DANA
P. O. Box 215 Sioux City 2, Iowa

WORK SHIRTS

10-DAY TRIAL
Orders Filled Promptly

79¢

3 for 2.25



AMAZING VALUES!

What a Buy! These are surplus stock from a big supply firm. Sturdy, serviceable work shirts, though used, have been washed, sterilized and reconditioned. Every shirt of long-wearing wash materials. Blue, tan, white. Strongly sewn; reinforced stitching at points of strain. Money back guarantee!

WORK PANTS TO MATCH.....99¢
Blue, Tan, White. Send waist measure and leg length.

COVERALLS.....1.95
Blue, tan, white. Send chest measure.

SEND NO MONEY!
Give name, address, city or town, size and color choice, (also state 2nd color choice). Pay postman, plus postage. Or send cash and we ship prepaid. Keep 10 days. If not satisfied, return for refund! Order Now!

YOUNG PRODUCTS
Dept. 11, 2605 Elmhurst Detroit 6, Mich.

ACCOUNTANT

BECOME AN EXPERT

.. BOOKKEEPER .. C.P.A.

The demand for skilled accountants—men and women who really know their business—is increasing. National and state legislation is requiring of business much more in the way of Auditing, Cost Accounting, Finance Law, Organization, Management, Finance. Men who prove their qualifications in this important field are promoted to responsible executive positions.

Knowledge of bookkeeping unnecessary. We train you from ground up, or according to your individual needs. Low cost; easy terms.

Send for free 48-page book describing the LaSalle accountancy training and the opportunities in this highly profitable field—plus "Ten Years' Promotion in One," a book which has helped many men.

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION

417 S. Dearborn Street—
Dept. 272-HR Chicago 8, Ill.

Please send me "Accountancy, the Profession that Pays"—plus "Ten Years' Promotion in One"—without obligation.

- ☐ Higher Accountancy
- ☐ C.P.A. Coaching
- ☐ Bookkeeping
- ☐ Law: L.L.B. Degree
- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Salesmanship
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Foremanship
- ☐ Industrial Management (Machine Shorthand)
- ☐ Stenotype

Name.....Age.....

Address.....

City, Zone, State.....



"GET ON"

Uncle Sam's

PAYROLL

START
as high
as \$3,450 Year

Prepare NOW For
Next Examinations

VETERANS GET SPECIAL PREFERENCE

Railway Postal Clerks
City Mail Carriers
City Postoffice Clerks
Stenographers-Typists
Customs Inspectors
Messengers, Etc.

32-Page Book
on Civil Service
FREE

Mail
Coupon
today—
SURE



FRANKLIN INSTITUTE

(Not Government Controlled)

Dept. C-96

Rochester 4, N. Y.

Rush to me, entirely free of charge, 32-page book with:
(1) A full description of U. S. Government jobs; (2) A list of U. S. Government jobs; (3) Tell me how to qualify for a job.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....Age.....

SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

On the other hand, the staggering variations in the characteristics supposed to have been so transmitted have not been explained by the proponents of this hypothesis, or of any other. (There are probably several science-fiction stories in these experiments, if anyone can think up a plausible explanation of the results. There's a short account—the only one I've seen—in Kellogg's *Darwinism Today*.)

May I suggest a series of stories based on various theories of evolution? "The Belt" certainly points the way, and, while Lamarckianism is a little too simple to make a first-rate story-idea, less-known theories contain fascinating plots, almost ready-made. (For instance, Biological Isolation, Germinal Selection, etc.) Kellogg's book is the best short account of these. Earlier ideas might figure in time-travel stories: for instance, the theories of Anaximander and Empedocles (the latter's theory was borrowed by Epicurus, from whose books it was summarized by Lucretius, who gives the only surviving account of it.) The evolutionist theologians, such as St. Augustine, might also figure in such stories.

Incidentally, writers of time-travel stories have generally avoided the most interesting aspects of inter-era contacts: the conflicts between ideas current in the different periods. (Boucher treated this in "The Barrier", the ideas were those of future times, which, of course, he invented. Far more interesting—and probably more difficult to write—would be such conflicts in the past.) How about some stories on this subject?

A very determined vote for long editorials.

de Camp and Blish are about the best for articles. Hang on to them. And try to pry Willy Ley away from his rockets and biological curiosae (or, as some think, nugae) long enough for him to write more articles like "The Search For Zero", and the one about whether the ancient Greeks could see blue. And why not suggest to de Camp that he forget archaeology long enough to write a few more articles like "Design for Life"? (As you may have guessed, I am most interested in articles and stories based on the biological sciences. Why not ask in the readers' preference coupon for opinions on this?)

And—oh yes—let's have a more explicit sequel to "We Shall Come Back!"

Michael Wigodsky, 402 West Clay,
Houston 19, Texas.

IT SAYS HERE

(Personally, I'm very fond of the "series of stories" gambit, and you'll see that I've taken your suggestion to include questions on it in the preference coupon. Meanwhile, I'm wide open to any story-submissions where an author wants to try out any kind of series on his own hook.)

Dear Bob:

Mrs. Bormartin's letter, commenting on Mr. Martello's comment on the May cover, reminds me of the sad case of Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900), who wrote a lot of Conan-esque fustian about how, when the Superman visits his woman, he takes his whip along. But the funny part was that Nietzsche was a timid, neurotic little rabbit of a man—scared to death of women—who never married—and as far as is known, died with virtue unsullied. The biggest talkers of male dominance are not always successful practitioners thereof. And male dominance is not universal among primitives; some tribes give the sexes approximate equality, and some are even female-dominated.

L. Sprague de Camp

(Well, natch, Sprague, the chances are that a gent who has the ability and means to carry his whip into various and sundry boudoirs isn't going to waste too much time elaborating the philosophy of it all. Besides, there's nothing quite as transcendental and exquisite as philosophy, unsullied by experience of the subject.)

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

A study of *Science Fiction Quarterly* and its attitude toward the science-fiction field indicates that the publication might be interested in pointing the way for science-fiction unity, based on terminology and the fictional characteristics of the worlds out in space. There are signs that such unity is already evolving. *Science Fiction Quarterly* might stimulate and direct its evolution.

Regarding terminology: Science-fiction weapons have varying names—"blasters", "rocket pistols", and so on. The reader feels, of course, that they are extra-deadly. But, he might well ask, how do they *look* and *operate*? An agreement among writers as to standard science-fiction weapons would afford the reader as clear a mental picture of each, as he now gets from the terms "revolver", "rifle", or "sub-machine gun."

[Turn Page]

For YOU - A QUICK EASY WAY TO

LEARN A LANGUAGE



BUSINESS

TRAVEL



CULTURAL



EDUCATION

SPANISH

FRENCH

RUSSIAN

GERMAN

LINGUAPHONE

SEND FOR

FREE

BOOKLET

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

PHONE

COUNTRY

POSTAL CODE

TELEFAX

TELETYPE

TELEVISION

RADIO

INTERNET

WORLD WIDE

WIRELESS

TELEPHONE

TELETYPE

TELEVISION

RADIO

INTERNET

WORLD WIDE

WIRELESS

TELEPHONE

TELETYPE

TELEVISION

Armed-Service Ratings
Greater Business Opportunities
Professional, Scientific and Educational Advancement
Doubled Travel Enjoyment
Wider Social and Cultural Horizons
What do you want to learn... French, Spanish, Russian, German, an Oriental language? With LINGUAPHONE you can learn any one of 29 languages in just 20 minutes a day.

LINGUAPHONE

World's-Standard Conversational Method is the natural way to learn languages...actually the same way you learned English even before you went to school. You hear, people speak in their native tongue. You listen - You learn - You understand - You speak. It's all amazingly easy!

In peace or war, another language can mean promotion, a better job or armed service rating, more pay, greater opportunities to you. When traveling, you'll be able to see and do things the native way.

You're never too old or too young to learn the LINGUAPHONE way! Right at home, learn—

any of 29 languages available, including the Oriental. Linguaphone Institute, 166-04 Rockefeller Plaza, N.Y. 20, N.Y. FREE book gives fascinating facts about LINGUAPHONE—why it is used by colleges, schools, armed services, and has been the choice of more than one million home-study students. Mail Coupon TODAY!

LINGUAPHONE INSTITUTE
166-04 Rockefeller Plaza, N.Y. 20, N.Y.

Send me the FREE Linguaphone book I want to learn.....language.

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Phone

Country

Postal Code

Telex

Teletype

Television

Radio

Internet

World Wide

Wireless

Telephone

Teletype

Television

Radio

Internet

World Wide

Wireless

Telephone

Teletype

Television

Radio

Internet

World Wide

Wireless

SCIENCE-FICTION CLASSICS:

1. "Martian Martyrs" (Coleridge)
2. "Valley of Pretenders" (Clive)
3. "The Machine that Thought" (Callahan)
4. "The New Life" (Coleridge)
5. "The Voice Commands" (Clive)
6. "Rhythm Rides the Rocket" (Olson)
7. "Fantasy Book No. 1"
8. "Strange Tales"
9. "Horror Parade"
10. "The Garden of Fear"

SPECIAL DEAL: Complete Set of these TEN BOOKS for only \$2

Limited Quantity: Order Now:

WEHMAN BROS. Dep't DC
712 Broadway New York 3, N. Y.



EXPERT DICE

CARDS, INKS, etc.

STRONG! RELIABLE!

MAGICIANS' HEADQUARTERS

FREE CATALOG! Send for It Today!

O. C. NOVELTY CO., Dept. 4
3311 W. MAIN OKLAHOMA CITY 4, OKLA.

ADD MULTIPLY CALCULATE at a glance!

Essential For—
SCHOOL
BUSINESS
HOME-SHOP
FACTORY
OFFICE

RAPID-FIRE CALCULATOR for
vast number combinations—and
fractions, too.
SAVES HOURS of tedious figuring.
GUARANTEED ACCURATE.
QUICK ANSWERS SET YOU
AHEAD FASTER!

Stop wasting precious time figuring. Now even a School-
boy can get 100% accurate answers at a Glance!
A PERMANENT CALCULATOR—ONLY \$30
ORDER NOW on MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE!
WEHMAN BROS., Dept. D A, 712 B'way, N.Y. 3, N. Y.

Is It TOO LATE to make your wishes come
true? Miracles of Mayan Oracle revealed.
Success in career—business—love—home
—happiness—money. Send one dollar for
beautiful wishing plates, symbolic and au-
thentic. Handy for pocket or purse. Simple
instructions for use. Also brief history of
miracles. IT WORKS! Or money back. Ad-
dress PYRAMID MAHIRI, Box 237,
Tempe City, Calif., Dept. DA-1

HYPNOTISM

Learn to apply this tremendous POWER. Win love.
Develop magnetic personality, control, increase your
income. ANYONE can master this great mystic power
in short time. DON'T DELAY. Write for free informa-
tion NOW—TODAY!

"Proven guaranteed results since 1921"
INSTITUTE OF APPLIED HYPNOLOGY
120 Central Park So., N.Y. 18, Dept. 25

FOR MEN ONLY?

THE GIRLS LOVE IT TOO



GALS
GAGS
PHOTOS
CARTOONS

4 BOOKS

EACH DIFFERENT!

MORE THAN 500 PAGES

ALL FOR
only 1 BUCK!

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

LARCH BOOK CO.

175 E. 25th Street, Dept. 130-A,
New York 10, N.Y.

ILLUSTRATED COMIC BOOKLETS

Sell our ILLUSTRATED COMIC BOOKLETS and other
NOVELTIES. Each booklet size 4 1/2 x 2 1/2 and is FULLY
ILLUSTRATED. We will send 24 assorted booklets prepaid
upon receipt of \$1.00 or 40 assorted booklets sent
prepaid upon receipt of \$2.00. NO CHECKS. Wholesale
novelty price list sent with order only. No orders
sent C. O. D.

REPSAC SALES CO.

3 Orchard St., Dept. 180-B New York 2, N. Y.

SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

Another helpful agreement—from the
reader's standpoint, at least—would con-
cern spaceships. Frequent references are
made to these vessels' "computers",
"screens", and "keyboards", but again the
words fail to produce a clear visualization.
That end could be achieved by a writer-
approved design of a spaceship, together
with drawings of its control room, living
quarters, etc., and a list of terms for its
parts.

With this data made available (the
method to be suggested further on), the
reader could easily ascertain what the writ-
ers were telling him, just as he can turn
to his dictionary and look up the nautical
terms encountered in a sea story.

Regarding the still-unexplored worlds
are the Venusians anthropoid, fungiform,
or what? Are they red, green, large small?
Venusians, and also Martians, often appear
in science-fiction, each writer setting forth
his own version of them.

After a few such stories, the science-fic-
tion reader begins to lose the sense of re-
ality that is so necessary for any fiction
enjoyment. "Venusian" or "Martian" be-
comes merely a word, not the name of a
being.

In an adventure story, "Arab" or "In-
dian" necessarily has definite meanings and
association. Couldn't science-fiction writers
get together about "Venusians" and "Mar-
tians"?

No reader can justly criticise the writers'
wish to give their imaginations full play.
The authors can, however, do that by creat-
ing their own worlds, plus inhabitants, as
other authors have long been creating their
own kingdoms and principalities.

One other point about the unexplored
worlds: Venus and Mars (when inhabited)
are usually presented not as planets, but as
nations. Their respective languages are de-
scribed as "Venusian" or "Martian", just
as one would say "French" or "German".
Is it plausible to portray a planet as one
huge state where a single tongue is used?

In pioneering a movement for science-
fiction unity, *Science Fiction Quarterly*
would, I'm sure, be doing both readers
and writers a service. Here are three sug-
gestions:

1. Propose a conference of writers, to
enable them to agree on certain points. The
conference could be carried on by mail,
Science Fiction Quarterly presiding.

2. Adopt certain basic "science-fiction

[Turn To Page 124]

**NEW! MAGIC PANEL FEATURE SLIMS LIKE MAGIC!
LOOK SLIMMER, MORE YOUTHFUL**

REDUCE

YOUR APPEARANCE!

THE FIGURE-ADJUSTER MUST BE THE BEST GIRDLE YOU EVER WORE . . . YOU MUST FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE and you MUST look and feel younger . . . Your shape MUST be noticeably improved or you get every cent back at once!

No matter how many other girdles you have tried, you can be sure: **NO OTHER GIRDLE CAN DO FOR YOU MORE THAN THE FIGURE-ADJUSTER!** No other girdle or supporter belt offers you more **BELLY CONTROL, BULGE control, HOLD-IN and STAY-UP power . . . safely, scientifically.** No other girdle can begin to approach the miracle-working **FIGURE-ADJUSTER** features! Figure-Adjuster is **LIGHT in weight (ideal for ANY weather)** yet powerfully strong! Figure-Adjuster allows **AIR** to circulate through it, **Absorbs perspiration**, is made by the most skilled craftsmen, and allows you to **ADJUST** it to just the right amount of **BULGE-CONTROL** you like and **NEED** for an **IMPROVED FIGURE!**

MAGIC PANEL CONTROL—No laces show when you wear a **SLIMMING Figure-Adjuster.** The control you get is completely **COMFORTABLE . . . and GUARANTEES** healthful, lasting support. Its **safty TUMMY PANEL** laces right up to meet the bra—**NO MIDRIF BULGE! LIPS and FLATTENS** the tummy, **SLAMS** down the waist, **TRIMS** the hips and eliminates the **"SPARE TIRE"** waistline roll! The **MAGIC ADJUSTABLE**, **slimming**, easily controlled panel is scientifically designed and is the result of testing different kinds of panels on thousands of women! Figure-Adjuster creates the **"BALANCED PRESSURE"** that gives each bulge the exact amount of **RESTRAINT** it requires. It gives you the right amount of **SUPPORT** where you need it **MOST!** Let Figure-Adjuster give you **MORE figure control . . . for more of your figure . . . let it give you a more BEAUTIFUL FIGURE . . . the slimmer, trimmer figure that INVITES romance!** You **ACTUALLY APPEAR SLIMMER AT ONCE WITH THE MAGIC PANEL** control of Figure-Adjuster. Colors **black blue or white.** Sizes 24 inch waist to 44, only \$4.98.

MAKE THIS TEST WITH YOUR OWN HANDS!

Clasp your hands over your **ABDOMEN**, press upwards and in gently but **FIRMLY.** You feel better, don't you! That's just what the **UP-LIFT adjustable FIGURE-ADJUSTER** does for you, only the **FIGURE-ADJUSTER** does it better. **MAIL COUPON and TEST IT AT HOME FOR 10 days FREE** at our expense! **NO OTHER GIRDLE AT ANY PRICE CAN GIVE YOU BETTER SUPPORT,** can make you look better, feel better or appear **slimmer and younger!** Sizes 24-44 waist.

100% MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE!

Test the Figure-Adjuster at home for ten days **FREE** at our expense! If a sent on approval! It must do all we claim for it or return it after ten days and we'll send your money right back. We take all the risk . . . that's because we know that even though you may have tried many others you haven't tried the **BEST** until you have tried a **FIGURE-ADJUSTER! MAIL COUPON NOW!**



**TRULY SENSATIONAL AT
NOW \$4.98**

formerly \$6.50

TRIM UNWANTED INCHES OFF YOUR MIDRIF, waist and hips with real

breathe-easy comfort. New scientific construction whittles away rolls and bulges . . . slimming, easy-to-adjust rayon satin tummy panel laces right up to your bra. In powerful elastic. White, light blue or nude. Small (25"-28"), Medium (27"-28"), Large (29"-30"), Extra Large (31"-32"). Also "PLUS" sizes for the fuller figure, XX (33"-35"), XXX (36"-38"), XXXX (39"-40"), XXXXX (41"-44").

You will look like and feel like this beautiful model in your new and improved cool—light weight **FIGURE-ADJUSTER**

**GUARANTEED TO DELIGHT
OR YOUR MONEY BACK!
10-DAY FREE TRIAL**

FREE!

"SECRETS OF LOVELINESS" booklet tells how to take advantage of correct choice of clothes, proper use of make-up and other secrets to help you look years younger, pounds and inches slimmer will be included **FREE** with order.

**For Your
Figure's
Sake
MAIL
THIS
COUPON
NOW!**

Why Diet? Try It!
● Takes Inches Off Tummy!

- Raises Abdomen and Keeps it in!
- Like Magic It Brings in Waist
- Makes Spreading Hiplines Conform to Firm Beauty
- Smooths and Slims Thighs
- Makes Your Clothes Fit Beautifully

SEND NO MONEY

FIGURE-ADJUSTER CO., DEPT. FA-389

318 Market St. Newark, New Jersey

You! Please rush "FIGURE-ADJUSTER" on approval. If not delighted I may return girdle within 10 days.

☐ I will pay postman \$4.98 plus postage.

☐ I enclose \$5.00, cash, check or money order, send postage prepaid. (I save up to 75c postage.)

Color: _____ 2nd color choice: _____

Size: _____ Panty Girdle: _____ Girdle: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zone: _____ State: _____

Please **PRINT** carefully. Be **SURE** to give **YOUR SIZE.**

ILLUSTRATED BOOKLETS AND NOVELTIES

Our VEST POCKET series of ILLUSTRATED COMIC BOOKLETS are the kind that are FULLY ILLUSTRATED with comic characters. The NOVELTIES are the kind MEN want for EXCITEMENT and AMUSEMENT. 16 DIFFERENT booklets and 4 DIFFERENT novelties sent in SEALED envelopes prepaid upon receipt of \$1.00. No C.O.D. orders or checks accepted. WHOLESALE PRICE LIST included with orders only.

LIVE WIRE NOVELTY CO., DEPT. 114-B

3 Orchard Street

New York 2, N.Y.



NATIONAL, Dept. E38

Box 5-STA. E

Toledo 9, Ohio

* SONG POEMS WANTED

* TO BE SENT TO MUSIC
* Submit one or more of your best poems for free examination. Any subject. Send poem for details and information.

* Phonograph Records Made
* FIVE STAR MUSIC MASTERS
660 Beacon Bldg. Boston 8, Mass.

ILLUSTRATED COMIC BOOKLETS



FOR MEN ONLY! POCKET SIZE!
THEY'RE TERRIFIC! PACKED WITH RARE CARTOONS AND GOOD COLOR ILLUSTRATIONS AS YOU LIKE IT. RICH IN FUN AND HUMOR. 20 BOOKLETS. ALL DIFFERENT. SENT PREPAID FOR \$1.00 IN PLAIN SEALED WRAPPER. NO C.O.D.'s.

NATIONAL, Dept. E38, Box 5-STA. E, Toledo 9, Ohio

DRUNK?

Jeopardizing HAPPINESS, HEALTH, and INCOME? Relief may be obtained speedily and quickly with U.S.A. ORIGINAL WOMEN METHOD. MAY BE USED SECRETLY! Used by leading alcoholic institutions to help BUILD AVERSION and ELIMINATE DESIRE FOR ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, now available to you. Has helped bring relief to many drinkers as a method of temporary ALCOHOL WITHDRAWAL and by BREAKING DRINKING CYCLE. INTERFERE WITH WORK FOR SOBER LIFE. One of many satisfied users writes: "Your method is wonderful! Am very happy over it!"—Mrs. M. D. E., Ill. Prepared by pharmacist formerly connected with leading alcoholic sanatorium. Comes in plain wrapper. READY TO USE, complete with instructions. WHY PAY MORE FOR IMITATIONS? ORDER ORIGINAL U.S.A. METHOD TODAY and SAVE FREE! with order generous supply special capsules to help ease up appetite and nervous and digestive system.

SEND NO MONEY! NOW ONLY \$4.50!

USE 10 DAYS AT OUR RISK—SATISFACTION GUARANTEED OR RETURN UNUSED PORTIONS and \$4.50 REFUNDED. Send name and address, for postman \$4.50 plus postage. Send \$4.50 with order and we pay balance.

UNITED MEDICAL RESEARCH

Box 428, Dept. U-10, Minneapolis 1, Minn.

FREE!



DICE • CARDS

MAGIC Cards—READ THE Perfect Dice, Magic Dice BOOKS—Inks, Daubs, Poker Chips Gaming Layouts, Dice Boxes, Counter Games, Punchboards. WRITE FOR CATALOG TODAY.

K. C. CARD CO., 552 So. Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

facts" for *Science Fiction Quarterly* writers—the size of the "Venusians", the speed of spaceships, etc.,

3. Publish a glossary of terms used by *Science Fiction Quarterly* writers, and a cutaway picture of a spaceship. (These might appear annually in, say, the February issue.)

The chief obstacle to unity seems to be the reluctance of one author to lay himself open to the charge of lifting the ideas of another. Even so—consciously, or unconsciously—it's done; it's bound to be done.

Science Fiction Quarterly could end the present awkward situation and permit its writers to give more attention to plot and characterization, and less to the struggle for "original" details.

Michael Mitchell, 2069 E. Chelton Ave., Philadelphia 28, Penna.

(The question in my mind is: would the "cure" turn out to be worse than the ailment? Let's hear from some authors on this, if any of the scribes are interested in considering the proposal, pro or con.)

ORDEAL ON SYRTIS

[Continued From Page 104]

back without air, huh? Of all the impossible—"

"Let me finish, Pops. You see, I had all the air I wanted. I told you the green-eyed Princess saved my life."

"What? I didn't even see no green-eyed Princess in that story!"

"No?" That big plant was the Princess! You know, the one with the green eye? The plant which ruled all the other smaller plants and told them when the crab-things came."

"Okay, okay!" Pops snorted. "So that's your princess. But how did she save your life?"

"Like I said, she was grateful. After all, hadn't I saved her? Seriously, it was nothing like that. Everything worked by instinct. I thought it was something like radar, but whatever it was, she knew when the crabs were coming. She beamed out this warning, and all the little plants hid inside their fleshy parts.

"Also, the princess plant had her own weapon, don't forget; she had those little spores which could kill the

ORDEAL ON SYRTIS

crabs. And remember how some of those spores stuck to my mackinaw? Well, I was in for quite a surprise when I took off my useless oxygen mask. I kept right on breathing!"

"You what?"

"I kept right on breathing. Those spores were poison for the crabs, but you know the old saying about one man's poison. Those spores are going to be pretty valuable one fine day, after we establish a permanent colony on Mars."

"Why? So what if they poison the crabs? They didn't look like they could hurt you much, not from what you said."

"Oh, I'm not talking about that. You know what killed the crabs? 'Oxygen?'"

"Yeah, oxygen. Those spores attract oxygen just like a candle flame attracts moths. Don't forget, there's oxygen in the Martian air, only it's not concentrated enough to do any good. Well, those spores concentrate it. All the oxygen in the neighborhood comes around those spores, and it's a pretty pleasant way to breathe, no mask, no bulky tanks. It's a good weapon for my green-eyed princess, for oxygen kills the crabs. But it was a life-saver for me."

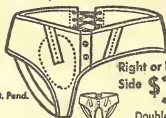
Everyone knew that Pops would have to settle for that. It was the truth, of course, and O'hara could show them when they stepped out on the Martian tundra for the first time in the morning. Meanwhile, there were some tales to be told.

"Okay," Pops decided after a time, "you win. But you still haven't done anything about that Saturn story. Remember, I had you going into the rings after your gal-friend, and—"

Bat O'hara picked it up from there. Before long he was doing a pretty good job, and although it seemed an impossible situation, McGee had a hunch B. Atwood O'hara would be able to talk his way out of it.

Immediate Comfort And Relief for You with RUPTURE-EASER

Trade Mark (A Piper Brace Product)
For MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN



Pat. Pend.

Right or Left
Side \$3.95
Double \$4.95

A strong, form fitting washable support designed to give you relief and comfort. Adjustable back-lacing and adjustable leg straps. Snaps up in front. Soft flat groin pad—**NO STEEL OR LEATHER BANDS.** Unexcelled for comfort, **INVISIBLE UNDER LIGHT CLOTHING.** Washable. Also used as after operation support.

● THE MOST EFFECTIVE HERNIA SUPPORT.

Thousands of people who have tried old-fashioned, expensive devices turn to Rupture-Easer for new comfort.

● RUPTURE-EASER IS SANITARY.

Can be washed without harm to fabric—you never offend when you wear Rupture-Easer.

● NO FITTING REQUIRED.

Just measure around the lowest part of the abdomen and specify right or left side or double.

Over 300,000 Grateful Users

Horley Decoteau, Montpelier, Vt. writes: "The last brace you sent me was wonderful. I have been ruptured for 30 years. I am now 36, and in 30 years, I have never been more pleased."

Minnie LoJeunesse, Minneapolis, Minn. says: "... the Rupture-Easer is very comfortable and almost a miracle as to the way it holds one in place, and am very much pleased and satisfied with the belt."

Frank H. Lewis, Adrian, Michigan writes: "Thanks to your Rupture-Easer I am able to continue my work."

BLESSED RELIEF DAY AND NIGHT—You can sleep in it—work in it—bathe in it!



10 DAY TRIAL OFFER

Money-back guarantee if you don't get relief.

PIPER BRACE CO., DEPT. DO-22

811 Wyandotte, Kansas City 6, Mo.

Piper Brace Company, Dept. DO-22

811 Wyandotte, Kansas City 6, Mo.

Please send my RUPTURE-EASER by return mail.

Right Side	☐ \$3.95	Measure around lowest part of
Left Side	☐ \$3.95	my abdomen
Double	☐ \$4.95	is _____ INCHES.

(Note: Be sure to give Size and Side when ordering.)

We Prepay Postage except on C.O.D.'s.

Enclosed is: ☐ Money Order ☐ Check for \$_____ ☐ Send C.O.D.

Name _____

Address _____

City and State _____

RUSH THIS COUPON NOW!

DICE — CARDS — GAME SUPPLIES

Perfects, Flats, Weights, Strippers and Readers
Made to your specifications

Established 1909 Catalogue upon Request
HILL BROS., Box D. Salida, Colo.



PEEK-A-BOO

DELICIOUS EYEPEELS

SENSATIONAL VIEWER WITH 20 FULL-COLOR PHOTOS OF BEAUTIFUL, "TALENTED" MODELS. DIFFERENT GIRL IN EACH EXCITING, REVEALING POSE. VIEWER COMPLETE WITH 20 PHOTOS, SENT PREPAID FOR \$1 IN PLAIN SEALED WRAPPER. NO C.O.D.s.

NATIONAL, Dept. 536, Box 8-Ste. B, Toledo 9, Ohio

BOOKLETS

The kind grownups like. Each one of these booklets is **POCKET SIZE**, also contains 8 **ILLUSTRATIONS**, and is full of fun and entertainment. 12 of these booklets, **ALL DIFFERENT**, shipped prepaid in **SEALED** wrapper upon receipt of \$1.00, or 24 **BOOKLETS**, **ALL DIFFERENT**, shipped prepaid for \$2.00, cash or money order. No orders sent C. O. D. Print name and address and mail to:

TREASURE NOVELTY CO., DEPT. 27-B
2 Allen Street, New York 3, N. Y.



STOP TOBACCO?

Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have with **TOBACCO REDEEMER**. Write TODAY for free booklet telling of marvelous effect of tobacco and of a treatment which has relieved many men.

In Business Since 1909
360,000 Satisfied Customers
THE HEWELL COMPANY
264 Clayton St., St. Louis 8, Mo.

FREE BOOK



SONGWRITERS

YOUR SONGS
PUBLISHED

\$1200.00 ADVANCE ROYALTY

**COMPLETE SONG
WRITING SERVICE**

We write the music for you, words without charge on 40-50 basis. We send you records, copies and copy-right your song for you in Washington, D. C.

GUARANTEED PUBLICATION

We guarantee the publication of at least two songs each month by a legitimate B.M.I. music publisher. The writers receive advance royalty and a standard royalty contract. The publisher pays all publication expenses.

WHAT ARE YOUR CHANCES?

If you have ability your chances are good. Now song-writers become famous every year. Maybe this is YOUR year. Publishers are constantly on the lookout for good songs. Turn your material over to a firm whose business is **SONGWRITING**.

WRITE TODAY

SEND YOUR POEM or lyric today for free examination and complete information on our exceptional offer.

HOLLYWOOD TUNESMITHS

Dept. K-2, 1558 No. Vine St., Hollywood 28, Calif.

ROGUE PRINCESS

[Continued From Page 87]

other kind. The picture Gram was using to advance Mr. Godwin's claim was partly a fake, using modern actors dressed up like eleventh century Anglo-Saxons. I knew that all along, but did not dare say so. They also found that legitimacy is no good, anyway, because every few generations you find that the putative heir to the throne is not the son of the king, but of some lover of the queen. So all that foolishness will soon be ended."

A MONTH later, having testified in the Canadian court that sentenced Thor Thomsen, Claude Godwin returned to Hollywood. Despite frantic long-distance conferences the studio had not been able to hold off on the shooting of *Scaramouche*, but had gone ahead with Ricardo Pergolesi in the title-role. However, as Godwin's contract had four months to run, they gave him the lead in *Carson of Venus*. Only, as the real Venus had been visited and found not to resemble that imagined by Burroughs in any particular, the setting of the story had been moved to a suppositious planet of Procyon and the title changed to *Swords Across the Void*. The studio had also found the Burroughs plot too corny for their purposes and had entirely re-written it until nothing was left of the original—not even the names of the characters.

Godwin sat in his bungalow telling his adventures to his friend Westbrook Wolff: "...and now Viggo Bruun is at Cal Tech finishing a new parachron, and he's promised me a job as technician when my contract runs out. I may never be a real scientist, but I can twiddle knobs and hold a soldering-iron..."

"How about our red-haired sun-bather?"

"Back at U. C. C.; her old man

ROGUE PRINCESS

took a house in Glendale, and thinks I'm Santa Claus because I got him a bit-part in *The Spider of Moscow*. Anker Gram stood on his head trying to get us all back to Greenland so he wouldn't have to pay me damages for kidnapping me, but they wouldn't go. That reminds me—"Godwin picked up the telephone and dialed. "Karen? Claude. Ja like to see the premiere of *Amazon Gold* tomorrow night?... Okay, I'll pick you up at twenty-hundred. See ya."

As Godwin hung up, Wolff looked at him with an amused expression, saying, "Don't tell me that after all the fighting and running you did to avoid marrying the dame you're going to do it anyway!"

"Not at all. I am dating Miss Hauch in the normal manner, and if on further acquaintance we decide we're made for each other and etcetera, who knows? Or again we may not. But nobody's gonna pressure us into it!"

★ THE ★ RECKONING

Here's how your votes rated the stories in our November issue.

- | | |
|--|------|
| 1. Survival of the Fittest
—Henderson | 2.85 |
| 2. Fugue — Marlowe | 3.07 |
| 3. We Shall Come Back
—Liddell | 3.61 |
| 4. The Belt — West | 3.80 |
| 5. The Black Alarm
—Smith | 4.07 |
| 6. Fools Errand
—del Rey | 4.50 |
| 7. Reaching For the Moon
—Lombino | 5.77 |

The first two didn't draw a single "dislike" mark!

WHAT EVERY AUTO MECHANIC WANTS TO KNOW

1800
PAGES



This Big Practical Book gives full information with working diagrams covering the principles, construction, ignition, service and repair of modern cars, trucks and buses.

Diesel Engines, Hydraulic and Fluid Drives Fully Explained.

A complete Guide of 1800 pages, with over 1500 illustrations showing inside views of the working parts, with instructions for service jobs.

IT PAYS TO KNOW

How to fit pistons—How to locate engine knock—How to fit connecting rod bearings—How to service main bearings—How to condition valves—How to time valves—How to adjust fan belts—How to adjust carburetors and

choke—How to rebuild a clutch—How to service automatic transmissions—How to service brakes—How to adjust steering gear—How to cope with ignition troubles—How to service distributors—How to time ignition—How to "tune up" an engine.

\$4 COMPLETE • PAY \$1 A MO. TO GET THE ASSISTANCE YOU YOURSELF SIMPLY FILL IN AND MAIL COUPON TODAY.

Step up your own skill with the facts and figures of your trade. *Audel's Mechanics Guides* contain Practical Inside Trade Information in a handy form, Fully Illustrated and Easy to Understand. Highly Endorsed. Check the book you want for **7 DAYS FREE EXAMINATION**. Send No Money, Nothing to pay Postman.



CUT HERE ——— MAIL ORDER

AUDEL, Publishers, 49 W. 23 St., NEW YORK 10, N.Y.

Please send me postpaid for FREE EXAMINATION books marked on below, if I decide to keep them I return to mail \$1 to 7 days on each book or set ordered and further mail \$1 monthly on each book or set until two paid price, otherwise I will return them.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| ☐ TRUCK & TRACTOR GUIDE, 1299 Pages . . . | \$4 |
| ☐ AUTOMOBILE MECHANICS GUIDE, 1800 Pages . . . | 4 |
| ☐ DIESEL ENGINE MANUAL, 575 Pages . . . | 2 |
| ☐ MACHINISTS HANDY BOOK, 1650 Pages . . . | 4 |
| ☐ WELDERS GUIDE, 400 Pages . . . | 1 |
| ☐ BLUE PRINT READING, 416 Pages . . . | 2 |
| ☐ MATHEMATICS & CALCULATIONS, 700 Pages . . . | 2 |
| ☐ SHEET METAL PATTERN LAYOUTS, 1100 Pages . . . | 4 |
| ☐ SHEET METAL WORKERS HANDY BOOK, 388 Pgs. . . | 1 |
| ☐ MECHANICAL DRAWING GUIDE, 160 Pages . . . | 1 |
| ☐ MECHANICAL DRAWING & DESIGN, 480 Pages . . . | 2 |
| ☐ AIRCRAFT WORKER, 240 Pages . . . | 1 |
| ☐ TELEVISION SERVICE MANUAL, 384 Pages . . . | 2 |
| ☐ RADIOGRAMS GUIDE, 914 Pages . . . | 4 |
| ☐ ELECTRONIC DEVICES, 216 Pages . . . | 2 |
| ☐ ELECTRIC MOTOR GUIDE, 1000 Pages . . . | 4 |
| ☐ ELECTRIC WIRING DIAGRAMS, 272 Pages . . . | 1 |
| ☐ ELECTRICIANS EXAMINATIONS, 290 Pages . . . | 1 |
| ☐ ELECTRIC POWER CALCULATIONS, 475 Pages . . . | 2 |
| ☐ HANDY BOOK OF ELECTRICITY, 1440 Pages . . . | 4 |
| ☐ ELECTRIC DICTIONARY, 9000 Terms . . . | 2 |
| ☐ ELECTRIC LIBRARY, 7000 Pages (12 Book Set) . . . | 18 |
| ☐ MARINE ENGINEERS HANDY BOOK, 1234 Pgs. . . | 4 |
| ☐ SHIPFITTERS HANDY BOOK, 250 Pages . . . | 1 |
| ☐ REFRIGERATION & Air Conditioning, 1780 Pgs. . . | 4 |
| ☐ MILLWRIGHTS & MECHANICS GUIDE, 1200 Pgs. . . | 4 |
| ☐ POWER PLANT ENGINEERS GUIDE, 1500 Pages . . . | 4 |
| ☐ ENGINEERS & FIREMANS EXAMS, 525 Pages . . . | 1 |
| ☐ PUMPS, Hydraulics & Air Compressors, 1659 Pgs. . . | 4 |
| ☐ ENGINEERS LIBRARY (3 Book Set) . . . | 9 |
| ☐ MECHANICAL DICTIONARY, 800 Pages . . . | 4 |
| ☐ GARDENERS & GROWERS GUIDES (4 Book Set) . . . | 6 |
| ☐ CARPENTERS & BUILDERS GUIDES (4 Book Set) . . . | 6 |
| ☐ PLUMBERS & Steamfitters Guides (4 Book Set) . . . | 6 |
| ☐ MASONS AND BUILDERS GUIDES (4 Book Set) . . . | 6 |
| ☐ PAINTERS & DECORATORS MANUAL, 450 Pgs. . . | 2 |
| ☐ HOUSE HEATING GUIDE, 1000 Pages . . . | 4 |
| ☐ OIL BURNER GUIDE, 384 Pages . . . | 1 |

MAIL
THIS
TODAY

Name

Address

Occupation

Employed by

HAM

SOLID STERLING SILVER

PHOTO RING



\$1.98

SEND NO MONEY

We will mount an exquisite transparency any snapshot of your loved one. Original returned. This luxurious ring, created by a leading designer of fine jewelry is made of solid sterling silver, not plated but **SOLID STERLING SILVER**. A unique keepsake of your loved one to treasure for years. Try ten days free. Hand tinted 50 cents extra. Pay postman only \$1.98 plus few cents postage and tax. Order this popular fascinating ring now. Ring is also available in solid gold for only \$7.98.

SEND NO MONEY!

Just mail us any picture or snapshot with paper strip measured around ring finger.

GOLDMART 22 E 17 St, New York 3, N.Y.
Dept. DA

☐ Send C.O.D. (Silver Ring) ☐ Enclosed \$1.00 (Silver Ring)
☐ Send C.O.D. (Gold Ring) ☐ Enclosed \$7.00 (Gold Ring)
☐ Please hand color ring selected

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____

FACTS ABOUT EPILEPSY

This most interesting and helpful booklet will be mailed to anyone while the supply lasts. We will send a free copy to anyone who writes for it.

Lakewood Neurophen Co., Station A.
Dept. DA-2, Cleveland 2, Ohio.

THE BATHROOM READER

A choice and private collection of stories and articles for the man who appreciates a laugh as well as his love—hilariously funny drawings by a master cartoonist. Limited number of copies available. Send \$1.98 in cash or money order.

M L SALES CO.—DEPT. D-2
241 Church St., New York 13, N.Y.

QUIT TOBACCO!

Remove all tobacco craving safe in every form and join the thousands who have completely obtained satisfactory freedom from tobacco with the old genuine TOBACCO BANISHER. Send for FREE BOOKLET describing the ill effects of tobacco, and a safe, reliable home treatment. A proven success for 39 years.

EUSTACE M. EUSTACESON CO.

2325 E. Victory Blvd. Dept. R P.O. World 3, Texas

AS I WAS SAYING...

AS I'VE NOTED before, there are considerable areas in this magazine where you, the readers, can influence policy and practices. There have been enough requests for longish "feature novels" to justify the experiment; now let's hear whether you'd like to see it repeated, either as a permanent feature, or as an occasional feature.

You've also asked for longer editorials: I'll try; that's all I can promise. Space was very short, as you can see, and I don't feel that my golden words are valuable enough so that a story ought to be shoved out in order to make way for the editorial pronouncements. On the matter of less sprawling titles on the cover, I can only say I'll take it up with the art department, which is there to administer company policy on the matter. (This entails such items as the type of cover and interior artwork we use, and, as I've said before, you shouldn't blame the artist for the type of cover or illustration; slam him if you don't like the drawing, of course, but remember he has to take orders, too!)

One more thing: you'll note, I'm sure, that the "preference page" is now located so that it can be removed without mutilating a story or department, or cutting up the magazine. Not that this kind of voting is anyone's obligation, in any sense of the word—but I'm not telepathic, and I won't know what you want, or, often more important, *don't want*, unless you tell me.

RWL

TERRIFIC PRICE SMASH

BUY NOW! SAVE 1/2
UP TO

**BIG
SIZE!**
**PUSH
BUTTON
SWITCH-KNIFE**
165

**PRESS
BUTTON TO OPEN**

Surprise your friends with this amazing PUSH-BUTTON knife! Every man should carry one!—inch blade of sharp steel! Just push button! Blade flies open lightning-fast! Notice bolsters for sure hand grip and safety lock. Some knife! Some boy! Only \$1.65



**Eternal Love
ENGAGEMENT AND
WEDDING SET**

Something special and very pretty! Imagines — 12 sparkling Pseudo Diamonds, imported from Europe, Wedding set! NATURAL Gold color, both 4-1/2 carats! They look like \$750.00 of light. Enjoy a lifetime! Try at our fair price back quick if not this golden opportunity!

MONEY BACK

Guarantee!

YOU RISK NOTHING!

Take 10 whole days to see, try, enjoy any article! Full price back unless pleased! Stock limited! Send COUPON below! Pay price plus few cents postage and tax on delivery. Then try 10 days at OUR risk. You can't lose a cent!

CONSUMERS MART
131 W. 33rd St., N. Y. 1, N. Y.

**AMAZING
WEATHER
"ROSE"**



Place near window — see color changes like magic! RED indicates rain, yellow, BLUE — fair and sunny, PURPLE — change coming! Amazes everybody! Beautiful, decorative flower pot given. Each \$1.65

**2 IN 1 CASE
& CIGARETTE
LIGHTER**



Slide your whole pack into this sleek, handsome, combination case and built-in, Sure-Fire Lighter. No more fumbling around for cigarettes or matches! Bargain price! \$1.95



Ladies' SPORTX Watch
Sturdy, accurate watch for sturdy women, girls, typists, etc. Luminous numbers and hands. Unbreakable and rich looking. Reduced to \$6.98

**Tear out
and mail
this
COUPON**

Select any article on our
10-DAY FREE TRIAL

Eldorado
**DE-LUXE
MEN'S WATCH**
The watch for active men — last word in smart styling! Sparkling Pseudo Diamonds and Rubies set around dial. Solid Gold Color Effect, chrome back. Unbreakable crystal. Low over-the-lacquer hands. Imported case resists shocks — easily adjusted. Swiss movement — guaranteed. Exclusive of Postal Ferryway. \$26.95. Special SALE price now, only \$9.99

**DATE
WATCH**
**DATE
SHOWS
IN WINDOW**
What a timepiece! Tells DATE and accurate TIME. Date changes every minute in tiny WINDOW. Sweep case. Unbreakable crystal. Limited guarantee exclusive of parts. Might be good looks. This is a RUSH! Only \$7.98

Men's INITIAL Ring
Your own INITIAL in raised Gold Color Effect set in a RUBY color stone, flanked by 2 Sparkling Pseudo DIAMONDS imported from Europe. 14 Karat Rolled Gold Plate! Fashionable! Smart! Wear with pride — enjoy a lifetime. Mention letter desired. Only \$2.97

**SOLID
SILVER**
Ruby ARMY Ring
It's brilliant! Extra heavy SOLID STERLING SILVER. Deep emerald RUBY style ring for red-blooded Americans. Big simulated RUBY in center, cut inside — Sparkles with rays of red, lustrous light. Superior de-luxe quality. Win popular. 3-1/2" wide with great Life-time value! Only \$3.95

SEND NO MONEY!

The Champion
Super Special Quality — a sure winner! Amazing! Real rose gold, many gold color effect. Big pseudo Diamond in center flanked by 2 others. \$4.95

Lovely Wedding Set
10 glittering brilliant diamonds to resemble lovely Wedding Ring set. Gorgeous Gold color. Fashionable! Command sets. \$2.95

Commando "5"
A big, impressive & big, impressive! Extra brilliancy. Extra heavy weight, natural Gold color, with \$750.00 appearance. Manly! Commando resists \$3.95

CONSUMERS MART, Dept. 120-A
131 West 33rd Street, New York 1, N. Y.

Write in articles desired in lines below. Send no money. Pay price shown plus few cents postage and tax on delivery. Try 10 days. Full price back if not pleased.

Name _____
Address _____
Town _____ State _____

SEND STRIP OF PAPER TO SHOW RING SIZE.

Readers' Preference Page



We depend a great deal upon you, the Readers, for indications as to what kind of stories you want to see in this magazine, as well as other aspects of our general policy. So, when you have finished this issue of Science Fiction Quarterly, we'd appreciate your ratings on the stories and article. They are listed in order of appearance; you list them in order of your preference. And if you would like to vote on other items, too, just fill in the spaces below. You can tear out this page, without mutilating any story, or department.

- 1. THREE WORLDS IN SHADOW — Gibson.....
- 2. ROGUE PRINCESS — de Camp
- 3. COMUNICADO — MacClean
- 4. ORDEAL ON SYRTIS — Lesser
- 5. INTERVENTION — Sherman

If you disliked any of the above stories, or the article, please mark an "X" to the left of the numeral.

Would you like to see a story approximately the length of "Three Worlds in Shadow" in each issue of this magazine? Or would you prefer that we feature shorter stories? Or would you rather leave the question open for each issue?

Do you like the idea of a series, such as Mr. Wigodsky suggests in his letter on page 120?

General Comment: covers, artwork, etc.



Fill in this page and mail it to Science Fiction Quarterly, c/o Columbia Publications, Inc., 241 Street, New York 13, New York.

"How I Became a Hotel Hostess"



Marion Prentice Wagner Secures Position, Though Without Previous Hotel Experience

"After years of security as a housewife my husband was suddenly gone—and at 50 I had to earn my own livelihood and decided to enroll in the Lewis School. Soon

after graduation, Lewis placed me in a fine position. Now I am Executive Hostess of this beautiful hotel. My work is varied and always fascinating. Words can't express my gratitude to Lewis Training.

"How I Stepped into a Big Pay Hotel Job"

Harry E. Roorbach, Veteran Wins Success as Hotel Executive



"While I was in the hospital awaiting discharge from the U. S. Navy, I enrolled for Lewis Training. Shortly after I had completed the course, the Lewis National Placement Service informed me of an opening near my home.

"At present, I am Night Manager in the largest hotel in Rochester. I owe my success to the Lewis course."

STEP INTO a WELL-PAID HOTEL POSITION

Well-paid, important positions, ever-increasing opportunities and a sound, substantial future await trained men and women in essential hotels, clubs, restaurants, defense housing and cafeterias, officers' and service clubs. Lewis graduates "making good" as Managers, Assistant Managers, Executive Housekeepers, Hostesses, and in 55 other types of well-paid positions. Record-breaking travel means greater opportunities than ever.

Previous experience proved unnecessary in this business, where you are not dropped because you are over 40. Lewis training qualifies you at home in leisure time.

FREE book describes this fascinating field; tells how you are registered FREE of extra cost in Lewis National Placement Service. Mail the coupon NOW!

Course Approved For Veterans' Train'g

LEWIS HOTEL TRAINING SCHOOL

Room VB-2561, Washington 7, D. C.

Lewis Hotel Training School
Room VB-2561
Washington 7, D. C.

36 TH **SUCCESSFUL**
YEAR

Send me, without obligation, your Free Book. I want to know how to qualify for a well-paid position at home, in my leisure time.

Name
(Please Print Name and Address)

Address

CityState

Be Protected ^{in case of} SICKNESS or ACCIDENT

HERE'S AN AMAZING NEW HOSPITALIZATION PLAN

NO TIME LIMIT

ON HOSPITAL ROOM AND BOARD

Policy Pays as Long as You Stay!

MAIL COUPON
BELOW

Accidental Death and POLIO COVERAGE INCLUDED!

COSTS ONLY 3¢ A DAY

Individual or Family Eligible . . . Birth to Age 70

This is it! Sold only by mail! America's newest and greatest Hospitalization Plan. Amazing coverage! Lower cost! Good anywhere in the U.S. It's exactly what you need!

If you get sick or have an accident, you may go to any recognized Hospital (Rest Homes, Sanitariums, Government Hospitals excluded). Your NORTH AMERICAN Policy will pay for Hospital Room, Board and General Nursing Care at the rate of **\$150.00 PER MONTH**. What's more, you can stay as long as necessary. There's **NO TIME LIMIT**. Now, in case you need **SURGERY**, due to sickness, accident or disease . . . the Policy pays lump CASH for 74 specific **SURGICAL OPERATIONS**. What a help . . . what a blessing it is to fall back on this kind of coverage in time of need.

LOOK WHAT ELSE YOU GET!

For **ACCIDENTAL DEATH** Policy pays in lieu of other benefits **\$500.00** . . . with a special provision giving 4 times the amount—or **\$2,000.00**—for death resulting from accident while traveling on a common carrier. But this isn't all. For still more protection, seldom included in ordinary Hospitalization—you and insured family members also get **POLIO** coverage in lieu of other benefits—**\$500.00** to cover **HOSPITAL BILLS**, **\$500.00** for **MEDICAL TREATMENT**, **\$500.00** for **ORTHOPEDIC APPLIANCES**.

Then, too, there are liberal Benefits in lieu of others for accidental **LOSS OF HANDS, FEET OR EYES**; Benefits for **EMERGENCY HOSPITAL TREATMENT** for accidents involving no confinement, etc. Imagine all this wonderful value and coverage at a rate for adults of only about 3¢ a day, 1½¢ a day for children to age

18 . . . and **CHILDREN GET FULL BENEFITS**. (Maternity Rider is available at small additional charge.)

IMPORTANT—The **NORTH AMERICAN POLICY** pays you **FULL BENEFITS** regardless of money you collect from other insurance sources for the same disability, including Workmen's Compensation. **WE PAY DIRECT TO YOU!** This means, if you are already carrying Hospitalization—be smart . . . buy this additional Policy, with its extra cash benefits, to protect yourself against today's higher Hospital costs. Don't Delay! **MAIL COUPON BELOW** for **FREE DETAILS**. No Agent will call!

NEW FEATURES! EXCLUSIVE EXTRAS! NO FINER PROTECTION FOR YOU & YOUR FAMILY



SICKNESS OR ACCIDENT



SPECIFIC SURGICAL BENEFITS



LOSS OF HANDS, EYES, FEET



INFANTILE PARALYSIS BENEFITS

FREE!
MAIL THIS
COUPON

Truly this is a remarkable Hospitalization Plan. Investigate it! Buy it! Mail coupon for complete details.

NO OBLIGATION.
NO AGENT WILL CALL.

North American Mutual INSURANCE COMPANY

Dept. 252-D North American Building, Wilmington 99, Delaware
Please send me without obligation full details about the new North American Hospitalization Plan. No Agent will call.

Name

Address

City State

(Paste on penny postcard or mail in envelope)